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WATCHING OVER THE FLOCK AND THE SHEPHERD



The Founders Journal



Committed to historic Baptist principles

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Watching Over the Flock
And the Shepherd

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Watching Over the Flock And the Shepherd

Tom Ascol

Pastors are always in need of encouragement. Paul understood this and so laces his letters to young Timothy with exhortations and reminders that are designed to keep Timothy motivated and focused on the goal of his high calling. Thirty-five years ago the late Louis McBurney published a book entitled, *Every Pastor Needs a Pastor*. Taking his cues from Paul, McBurney tried to offer practical encouragements to pastors who, too often, walk a lonely road. As a young pastor, I was greatly helped by his insights.

Founders Ministries has always been primarily (though not exclusively) focused on pastors. Through the years we have tailored our efforts to encourage pastors to be faithful to their calling and to persevere in their responsibilities. Our theory has been—and remains—that if we help a pastor, we help a church (or perhaps, multiple churches). The older that I get, the more I find my heart going out to my fellow pastors and the more I want to encourage them in the great work to which we have been called.

This issue of the *Founders Journal*—the first that is being published exclusively in an electronic format—is designed with that goal and purpose in mind. B. H. Carroll's sermon was directed particularly to pastors and is a good reminder of the incredible responsibility and privilege that go with being a preacher of the gospel. Chris Lee's insights into the ministry of the Puritan, Thomas Watson, are relevant and applicable to modern pastors, as is the comfort that John May draws out of Horatius Bonar's reflections on rest.

If you are a pastor, my prayer is that you will be encouraged by the articles in this issue. If you are not a pastor then I hope that not only will you be encouraged but also that you will pass along these articles to your own pastor in hopes that he might be helped by them, too. ☺

News

2012 Founders Fellowship Breakfast

Dr. Tom Nettles will be speaking this year at the Founders Fellowship Breakfast on the theme: *Retrospect and Prospect: A Historian's Perspective on the Future of the Southern Baptist Convention*. The breakfast will be at 6:30 AM on Tuesday, June 19, 2012 in the Versailles Ballroom, Level 3 at the Hilton New Orleans Riverside Hotel in New Orleans, LA.

More information online: www.founders.org/conferences/ffb/

Saved By Faith Youth Challenge

The annual Saved By Faith Youth Challenge (for students 7th through 12th grade) will be held July 30 to August 3, 2012 at Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Missouri. Dr. Tom Ascol, the featured speaker, will address the theme: *Becoming Men and Women of Virtue*.

For more information: <http://sbfyc.org/>

Founders Study Center

Make plans now to join us this fall! The Founders Study Center will be announcing Fall 2012 courses on June 15, 2012. Registration for the fall will begin on July 20, 2012. Fall orientation for students will open August 20, 2012; courses begin on September 4, 2012.

For more information: <http://study.founders.org/>

Coming Summer 2012

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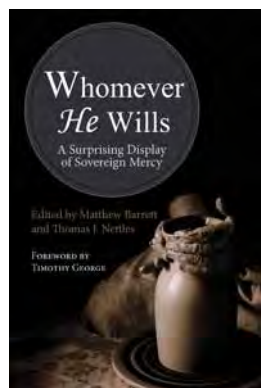
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Thomas Watson As Pastor and Scholar

Chris Lee

It is my opinion that Thomas Watson is one of Christian history's greatest kept secrets. Although he was one of the most popular preachers in Puritan London in his time, few people today have even heard of him. My first objective was to investigate the biographical information available. This was particularly difficult given that most books and articles only offer one or two paragraphs on his life. I felt that it was also important to consider any background information that might be available to help me understand the original context of his sermons and books. Secondly, I wanted this paper to accurately summarize the primary sources available from Watson. Given the parameters, I sought only to address those themes which appear in *every* sermon or book. In the last section of the paper, I will attempt to propose some practical applications from Watson's life and writings. It is my hope that with the seemingly renewed interest in Puritan writings fueled by the combined efforts of the major Christian publishing houses, Thomas Watson might once again aid the disciples of Christ in their quest to know God more fully and live their lives to His glory.¹

The Origins and Ideals of Puritanism²

Puritanism is thought to have originated with Reformed ministers Richard Greenham and Richard Rogers in the 1570s, but some would argue that the idea behind Puritanism goes all the way back to William Tyndale in 1524.³ The term "Puritan" was at first a pejorative term to describe both the purity of life, church, and doctrine for which the first adherents strived. Because of its unfortunate history, many members wanted to remove association with the name. Others saw the term as a compliment and sought rather to change the meaning of the word entirely. One such man who was instrumental in developing the idea of Puritanism was William Perkins.⁴ Unfortunately, derogatory nicknames were the least of the worries for the Puritans. Over the years many pastors and laymen were cast out of their churches. Some men and women, who continued to meet illegally, were tortured or killed for their faithfulness to the cause.⁵ Instead of suffocating the movement, the persecution actually chased some Puritans to the New World where they flourished in the New England Colonies.

At a foundational level, Puritanism was a system of chiefly pastoral theology that concentrated on the holiness of the believer and the holiness of doctrine. It was a system that held that the Reformation was incomplete and that the end goal should be a truly Reformed church. For this reason, the Puritans respected Church tradition but were quick to disregard it if it disagreed with Scripture.⁶ Although most historians mark the end of Puritanism with the Act of Toleration in 1687, many pastors such as Jonathan Edwards and Charles Spurgeon are considered Puritans who were born out of season.⁷

A Brief Biography of Thomas Watson

Almost nothing is known about the birth of Thomas Watson. No date or place of his birth is known. Nothing remains to indicate who his parents were or if he had any siblings. In a way, it is almost fitting that such a brilliant man should have such an obscure past. One of the earliest records of his life shows that he attended Emmanuel College in England, which was the college choice of many of the great Puritans. During his life he accepted many different pastorates and many forms of itinerate speaking. His ministry was supported by his wife, Abigail and his seven children. Sadly, four of Watson's children did not survive their early childhood years. Amazingly, in his books and sermons there does not seem to be the slightest hint of this struggle. In his later ministry, Watson was preaching several times a week (sometimes illegally), he was publishing books and sermons on a yearly basis, he was persecuted for his political connections—imprisoned at least once, he was persecuted for his doctrinal stances, his grief-stricken wife was taking care of his remaining children, he was bearing the burdens of his various flocks, and all of this time Watson was still able to proclaim the sovereignty and goodness of God.

One of the most significant events to take place during his life was the uprising of the Puritans against King Charles I.⁸ Unlike many of the Puritans, Watson opposed Oliver Cromwell's attempt to take over the English government. At one time, Watson was called to speak before Parliament with his good friend Thomas Brooks. In his sermon to Parliament, Brooks stated that it was God's will for Charles to be removed and for the Puritans to take over the government. Brooks warned that if the Puritans did not finish what they had started, God would judge them for not doing His work. Immediately after his sermon, Watson was asked to take the pulpit. His sermon, entitled "God's Anatomy upon Man's Heart" argued that God had placed Charles in power for a reason and that the Puritans must submit to his leadership. He warned that if the Puritans continued in the same path, God would judge them for removing one of His chosen leaders. As could be expected, Parliament sided with Brooks and published his sermon for the public.

Watson was discouraged but decided to raise the money himself to publish and distribute his own sermon.⁹

After Charles I was beheaded, Watson continued to try to remove Cromwell from power. Along with Christopher Love, he tried to usher Charles II into the throne. For their efforts, Love was executed and Watson was sentenced to be kept in the infamous London Tower. After the death of Cromwell, Watson eventually received his wish as Charles II took over the throne. His reign started out with grand promises for toleration and freedom, but instead brought even worse persecution on the Puritans. During his reign, Charles II instituted the Act of Uniformity (also known as The Great Ejection—1662). Those who chose not to conform to the prescribed limitations on worship were tossed out of their pulpits and were not allowed to preach. It is interesting to note that within the first year after Watson lost his pulpit he published *All Things for Good*, which was his meditations on God's sovereignty and power from Romans 8:28. Charles also developed the Conventicle Act and the Five Mile Act. The Conventicle Act stated that a pastor could have no more than five non-family members in his house at one time. The Five Mile Act forbade any pastor from living within five miles of their former parishes. These laws were brought up to prohibit the Puritans from meeting together for worship. In disobedience to these laws, Watson would walk several miles to speak with his people. He would also hold secret church meetings deep in the woods or in a barn.¹⁰ Eventually the turmoil subsided and Watson was able to have several more years of active preaching ministry. When his health started to deteriorate he retired from his vocational ministry, but he never truly stopped being a pastor. He died in 1687 while praying in his closet.

What seemed to set Watson apart from other great thinkers and preachers in Christianity past was his ability to take difficult theology and make it understandable for the average church-goer. The primary way by which he did this was through his vivid word pictures. It was as though Watson could adequately explain a theological issue in a couple of sentences when most pastors or scholars would have to supply a small paper. Watson was very imaginative and poetic in his presentation of Scripture. Throughout his writings the reader finds illustrations from history, botany, medicine, physics, mythology, logic, economics and human nature. Watson had a seemingly endless supply of knowledge about almost every subject in the world. It was through these word pictures that he helped his people make mental connections to any given text. Watson was also very poetic in the way that presented his sermons. Almost every sermon still in publication contains elements of rhythm, rhyme, alliteration and euphony.¹¹ Watson masterfully crafted sermons that were not only substantive and satisfying theologically, but also that had the simplicity and beauty that even the most casual attendee of his church could appreciate and admire.

Watson on Preaching, Scripture, and Theology

Watson had much to say about the value of Scripture and theology for himself and for his people. Apart from any mistakes he may have made in his political choices, it was clear that this man labored for his people in the Word. It would have been difficult enough either to have been persecuted or to care for his congregation in troubling times, but Watson did both. He was able to prepare brilliant sermons knowing that he would be breaking the law to preach them.¹² Many times the pain and struggle can be picked up merely from reading some of his sermons. In a sermon on the Westminster Catechism, Watson said, “Every blow of the hammer is to fasten the nails of the building; so the preacher’s words are to fasten you the more to Christ; they weaken themselves to strengthen and settle you.”¹³ Throughout his ministry, he saw himself as a doctor of souls, prescribing precious promises to ward off the sickness of sin and despair.

God worked through Watson’s weaknesses and struggles to keep him vigilant that his flock would not wander from the faith. Watson even corrected other ministers who seemed to be less concerned with handling the Scriptures accurately and powerfully. In trying to justify putting forth the effort to preach well, Watson mourned that many pastors had “sown pillows under their people, making them sleep so securely that they never woke till they were in hell!”¹⁴

Paired with Watson’s precision of doctrine was his mission to oversee himself. Watson *feared* being a hypocritical pastor. He understood that it would be much better to find another source of work than to push his people to be holy if he was unwilling to yield to righteousness. The wrath of God that he so often preached about would become a terror-striking reality if he proved not to be of the faith. It would be heightened if his sin caused any of his people to stumble.¹⁵

While there are some instances of Watson’s own personal discipline of becoming a student of the Bible, much of what he had to say was directed to his people. He understood that his people would be best prepared for suffering, pursuing holiness and entrance into eternity if they were solidly anchored in Scripture and correct theology. Watson’s starting point was to make his people aware of their dependence upon the Holy Spirit for the interpretation and application of Scripture. In seventeenth century Europe, questions about the Reformation doctrines were still being raised. Many believers were forced to choose between the traditional Catholic Church and the many new Protestant branches. To teach a people to seek God for understanding and wisdom in Bible reading would have been difficult enough, but Watson also had to battle Catholic influences which sought to drag his churches from him.¹⁶

On the other hand, Watson did not want to make Bible reading into an academic exercise that neglected fruit. In his sermons on Biblical interpretation, Watson advocates consistent meditation upon the character of God as found in the

Scriptures. In order for the Word to become ingrained in the minds and hearts of his people Watson encouraged them to be careful of what they heard. The temptation would have been to become complacent with merely the hearing of Word to the neglect of knowing the Word.¹⁷ When discouraged or in a season of doubt, Watson encouraged his people to pick up their Bible and read until their hearts were happy in God. Regardless of what difficult circumstances they faced or what evil notions they were tempted to have against God, Watson believed that the Holy Spirit was willing and capable of comforting and strengthening them through the Word.¹⁸

When his people knew the biblical narrative and were constantly thinking about what they read and heard, Watson challenged his churches to formulate good theology. As mentioned above, Watson was a strong advocate for training in the catechism for adults as well as children. He supported this effort by preaching approximately one hundred and seventy-six sermons on the Westminster Assembly's Catechism.¹⁹ As in his concern in Bible reading, Watson did not want his people just to know good doctrine. He saw training in good theology to be a life and death issue. The amount of value that a believer placed on his relationship with God could be measured by the amount of quality time that they spent thinking about Him and praying to Him. Watson taught that while the visible fruits of holiness were necessary and important, the invisible fruits of the heart and mind were also necessary for assurance of salvation.²⁰

Additionally, if the people were not able to formulate a good foundation in their thoughts of God, they would be tossed and destroyed by both poor preaching and suffering. Watson keenly understood that times of spiritual struggle were not the times to formulate accurate thoughts about God. He exhorted his people to come to the correct conclusions about the nature of God before they entered trials so that they would be sustained: "The thoughts we have of God in the time of health, will be a comfort to us in the time of sickness."²¹ If his churches were not grounded in their faith and understanding of Scripture, they would neither be inclined to suffer nor contend for it.²²

Watson on the Gospel

Regardless of the topic, Watson always kept the gospel at the center of his books and sermons. His stern view on the heinousness of sin and its corrupting nature made him appreciate the work of God in regeneration all the more. Watson considered it the greatest miracle in that while "Satan would have Christ prove his deity by turning stones into bread, Christ has wrought a far greater miracle in making stones become flesh."²³ All of Watson's writings share a child-like wonder at the sacrificial depth of Christ's love for His people. This love caused Christ to set aside His heavenly glory for a time in order to suffer as a man. Watson pointed

out the biblical truth that while earthly relationships were a sign of the love of God, they were eclipsed many times over by the Savior who died to save His wife:

“Christ has suffered more for his spouse than ever any husband did for a wife. He suffered poverty and ignominy [humiliation]. He who crowned the heavens with stars was himself crowned with thorns. He was called a companion of sinners, so that we might be made companions of angels. He was regardless of his life; he leaped into the sea of his Father’s wrath to save his spouse from drowning.”²⁴

In presenting the gospel, Watson was quick to point out the strength and value of the atoning blood. This served to glorify Christ by relieving the fear of the lost that they were too evil to be saved. Even though they committed sins only for the span of their earthly lives, the just penalty was eternal death. But Watson lifted the hearts of his listeners in explaining that Christ’s merit was greater than their sin: “Consider, thou almost despairing soul, there is not so much sin in man as there is mercy in God.”²⁵

In each of his sermons, Watson stressed that this atoning blood was available for as many as would repent of their sins and believe in Christ. He argued that if a man had a disease for which there was a known cure, that man would take every necessary step to find and use that cure. But in the matter of the soul, which was far worse than any physical disease, men seemed to be content to wallow in damnation:

“If a man were poisoned, what a comfort it would be to him to hear that there was an herb in the garden that could heal him! If he had a gangrene in his body, and were given over by all his friends, how glad he would be to hear of a surgeon who could cure him! O sinner, you are full of peccant tumors; you have a gangrened soul. But there is a Physician who can recover you. There is hope in Israel concerning this; though there is an old serpent to sting us with his temptations, yet there is a brazen serpent to heal us with His blood.”²⁶

Watson also showed the availability of forgiveness to those who were already saved. To keep them from sinking into morbid depression over the possibility of falling out of God’s favor, Watson counseled them that if Christ told his followers (who were selfish, sinful and finite) to forgive those who did wrong to them “seventy times seven” times a day then they could know that their heavenly Father would be sure to outdo His children in forgiveness.²⁷

The result of realizing the value of Christ’s sacrifice and repenting of one’s sins meant pure joy for the believer from that moment to the end of eternity.²⁸ He could then live his life in victory knowing that God was for him and would orchestrate the events of his life in a magnificent, perfect plan. Now that the weight

of God's impending wrath had been removed, the believer was now free to suffer for the glory of God, pursue holiness for the glory of God, and enter eternal bliss for the glory of God.

Watson on Suffering

At a time when Protestants in general and Non-Conformists in particular were being persecuted, Watson was a good shepherd that settled the sheep. Watson did not shy away from the problem of pain that seemed to affect the godly more than the sinful. Watson said of his ministry that "there are two things which I have always looked upon as difficult. The one is, to make the wicked sad; the other is, to make the godly joyful."²⁹ Because he had suffered with them, he could speak from personal experience on the reality of loss and affliction. Primarily from Scripture but also from his experience, he understood that God used suffering not only to correct the sins of His people but also to make them long for His presence all the more.

In an interesting fashion, Watson rarely made a distinction between the suffering of persecution and the suffering that God allowed for growth. While the two different kinds of suffering may have *seemed* to have come through different means, Watson observed that God was in control of all events surrounding pain. If God allowed someone to persecute His Church, it was for their good and His glory. If God allowed one of His children to suffer the loss of a child, it was for their good and His glory. The means of affliction were not nearly as important as the glorious end.³⁰ Watson was cautious, yet confident to answer the questions both of discouraged saints and slanderous devils.

Why suffer? It makes us more like Christ.

Watson's first observation on suffering was that God used it to conform His people more into the image of His Son.³¹ Watson had learned from the Apostle Paul that in order to truly appreciate the glory of Redemption and the Resurrection, God caused His children join Christ in his sufferings (Philippians 3:7–11). To experience something of the pain of Christ was to grow more in the knowledge of the glory and love of God. When the Christian understood the power of the sacrifice, he would then be more zealous for the spread of the gospel.

Why suffer? It tears us away from the world.

Watson believed that God chose to allow His people to go through hardship so that they might find joy and satisfaction only in Him. Because of their extreme cravings for sin, men desired earthly comforts at the expense of eternal rewards. Left to their own inclinations, mankind would plunge themselves into a sea of

God's wrath. Watson understood affliction to be part of the salvation process. To describe the process of "escaping" affliction, he used the image of drowning: "A man, by falling into briers, is saved from falling into the river; so God lets us fall into the briers of affliction that we may not be drowned in perdition."³² Through carelessness and deception, many people find themselves consumed in God's wrath. Watson argued that giving light affliction on earth was a sign of covenantal, redeeming love. Although the separation from sinful things was painful, he viewed his sufferings as giving up the lesser in order to save the greater.

God would have all of His children's attention and affection.³³ In fact, Watson understood that for God to allow people to continue in their sin without any restrictive suffering was a sign of strict judgment. Through pain, God was severing the Christian's heart from the world. From Watson's perspective, suffering had a way of chasing the believer closer to God:

"How comforted should they be in all conditions, let the times be what they will! Their Father who is in heaven rules over all. If troubles arise, they carry them sooner to their Father. The more violently the wind beats against the sails of a ship, the sooner it is brought to the haven; and the more fiercely God's children are assaulted, the sooner they come to their Father's house."³⁴

While Watson believed that there were appropriate forms of mourning and questioning, he always sought to bring his people back to the sovereignty of God. If God was good, all-powerful, and all-knowing; and if He had chosen a people to love eternally, then any event in their lives was an example of condescending grace. God was allowing His children to suffer only for a few years as opposed to an eternity of suffering. This created a clear distinction between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world. For Watson, those whom God intended to destroy, He allowed to drown in their own "prosperity."

Why suffer? God leads to something better.

But some cynics might find the use of persecution and affliction to be outside of God's character. Is God not love? Why would He allow His creatures, especially His chosen creatures to suffer as they do? Watson answered this question by arguing that when God takes away something good, it is only to bring them something better: "Afflictions are sharp arrows, but shot from the hand of a loving Father. If a man should throw a bag of money at another, and it should bruise him a little, and raise the skin, he would not be offended, but take it as a fruit of love; so, when God bruises us with affliction, it is to enrich us with the golden graces of his Spirit..."³⁵ This is not to confuse Watson's teachings with those of the "prosperity gospel." Since God should be the sole source of satisfaction for His people, He

gives them what they desire the most. God, in His infinite love and wisdom, takes away empty idols and replaces them with fullness of joy.³⁶

Watson believed that the application of this doctrine of suffering was for the congregation to trust God in His providence and to be content with His plan for their lives. As stated above, Watson never argued that the Christian must be stoic amidst pain. The main distinction that he made between correctly handling affliction and committing blasphemy is that “in the one we complain to God; in the other we complain of God.”³⁷ How the Christian handled hardship was directly tied to the glory of God. God is willing to patiently listen to His children when they hurt, but He will not suffer His reputation to be tarnished.

If the Christian needed more motivation to fight “hard thoughts” against God, Watson believed that the devil saw the discontent of the believer as a success. If he was unable to steal away their souls, he was content to steal their confidence in God:

“If the devil is capable of any delight, it is to see the saints’ disquiets: their groans are his music. It is a sport to him to see them torture themselves upon the rack of melancholy, and almost drown themselves in tears. When the godly have unjust surmises of God, question his love, deny the work of grace, and fall to wishing they had never been born, Satan is ready to clap his hands, and shout for a victory.”³⁸

When the believer is content in His God, he has the ability to be at peace in any situation in which he finds himself. Although the world and the Satanic forces may be granted the power to take away earthly possessions and physical comfort, God never allows them to take a Christian’s faith and contentment. In fact, the only way by which a saint may lose his confidence is to disbelieve the promises found in God’s Word: “This holy contentment keeps the heart from fainting in the autumn: when the fruit and leaves are gone, there is still sap in the root. So when there comes an autumn in the history of the Christian, and the leaves of his earthly prosperity fall off, there is the sap of contentment in his heart. The contented heart is never out of heart.”³⁹

Watson on the Pursuit of Holiness

One of the other major themes in Watson’s works is holiness. Like many of the Puritans before and after him, Watson was concerned not only that his people have the correct theology but that assurance of their salvation was seen through the fruit in their lives. Throughout his writing and preaching ministry, Watson waged a continuous campaign to alert his people of the dangers of sin and the joy in conquering it.

The Argument for Fighting Sin

It is not as though Watson made sin out to be merely an inconvenience on the path to heaven. Instead, the battle for purity would be a daily struggle from which the Christian would have no rest until his promotion into the presence of God. Watson made clear the cost of following Christ and made sure that he communicated the necessary sacrifice to both his saved and unbelieving listeners. But while this message might have caused some to rethink their commitment to the body of Christ, Watson warned, “It is better to go with difficulty to heaven than with ease to hell.”⁴⁰ Self-denial would be required either temporarily in denying fleshly desires or throughout eternity in the denial of the kind affection of God.

For Watson, the decision was clear. The only explanation for why a person would choose the transient joys over the eternal was a marring of the reason and the conscience from sin. Watson believed that men simply did not know how to contemplate the reality of eternity. They were actually convinced that their desires, which would cost them an infinite sum to satisfy, were too strong to be restrained. Watson considered them fools who were willing “for a drop of pleasure to drink a sea of wrath.”⁴¹ In a powerful illustration portraying the utter stupidity of choosing sin, Watson reports:

“I have read a story of a virgin who, being tempted by a young man to commit folly, said unto him, ‘Grant me but one request and I will do what you ask.’ ‘What is that?’ said he. ‘Do but hold your finger one hour in this burning candle.’ No he would not do that. Said she, ‘Will you not for my sake hold your finger an hour in the candle, and will you have my soul lie burning in hell forever?’”⁴²

This is not to say that Watson was self-righteous in his stance on sin. His wonder of the dullness of man’s reason was exceeded only by his wonder in the God who had opened his eyes to the truth. In order to be a child of God the Christian had to have a holy hatred of the damnable desires of the flesh. Indeed, Watson pointed out that it was these very sins for which Christ died on the cross: “A true child of God seeks to be revenged most of those sins which have dishonored God most.”⁴³ Watson argued that believers should not honor those wicked requests when they brought so much shame on Christ. That glory which *seemed* to be lost at the crucifixion could now be proclaimed from the mouths of those satisfied only in the blessings of the risen Savior. For Watson, one could not consider himself in love with Christ until he was at war with sin.⁴⁴

For Watson, the only godly response to temptation was to fight consistently and passionately. In order to be a successful soldier, it was important to have the correct mindset when facing sin. He argued that some temptations could be avoided in a passive manner simply by making a conscious effort to know one’s

surroundings.⁴⁵ Christians should be knowledgeable both of their weaknesses and the ways that the enemy has caught them before. On the other hand, some forms of temptation could only be suffocated by intense mortification. Watson used the image of Uriah being sent to the front lines of a war: “Oh, if you would not lose glory, mortify the beloved sin; set it, as Uriah, in the forefront of the battle to be slain. By plucking out this right eye you will see the better to go to heaven.”⁴⁶

It should be noted that there is available forgiveness in case of failure. While the Puritans have often been labeled as legalists, those who actually read Watson find that the people in the original audience would have been warmed by the pastoral appeal to grace found in every sermon or book.⁴⁷ Watson encouraged those who were seeking to reform by offering them guidance to learn from their past mistakes: “When a wild beast gets over the hedge and hurts the corn, the farmer will make his fence stronger; so, when the devil gets over the fence by temptation, and foils a Christian, he will be sure to mend his fence, and be more vigilant against temptation afterwards.”⁴⁸ Watson was also gracious towards his people in that he did not expect overnight change. As mentioned above, Watson saw the fight against sin as a lifelong war and not a short-term skirmish. The Christian’s goal should be either to improve in strength daily or to learn from failures.⁴⁹

In opposition to the problem of Christians sinning, Watson was also intentional to address those who were lost yet seemed to live lives of piety and generosity. Watson was willing to admit that sinful people have the ability to do good works and to even show *characteristics* of a saved person without actually having a saving knowledge of Christ. These he warned, “A piece of brass may shine, but, lacking the king’s image, it will not pass as currency. A man may shine with moral virtues, but lacking the image of God consisting in holiness he will not pass as currency at the Day of Judgment.”⁵⁰ Watson was sure to make a clear distinction between those who are good outwardly and those who are truly born again. Although a sinner may fool people, including his church, he will not fool God on Judgment Day.

The Method of Fighting Sin

It must not be assumed that Watson believed that mere mental power and good choices were enough to fight sin. For him, believers carried no power in themselves except that which they received from God. The first way through which Christians received power was the intercessory prayers of Christ. Watson said, “This prayer [John 17], which he made on earth, is the copy and pattern of His prayer in heaven. What a comfort is this; when Satan is tempting, Christ is praying.”⁵¹ This prayer was mighty to secure the power of God to fight and conquer sin. Watson believed that the answer to this prayer came chiefly through the Word of God administered through the Holy Spirit. The Word was to be read,

heard, memorized, discussed, and meditated on. If the believer put forth the effort to study God's Word, he would be granted the necessary faith and power to fight off the thief who came to steal, kill and destroy.⁵²

When a community of people made this commitment to the Word, the result would be a church where no soldier would be fighting alone. The church became something of a hospital where wounds were bandaged, medicine was given, and encouragement was administered to go back into the world and continue the fight. Watson believed strongly in the power of the Word preached, the Word discussed, and the Word prayed. Concerning corporate prayer Watson argued, "If you had a child who was sick, you would beg the prayers of others. You have a soul that is sick, sick with pride and lust, sick unto death. Oh, beg the prayers of godly friends that God will heal you with His grace."⁵³ Watson believed that the fellowship of the Body was an important gift of God to fight off the temptations of the world. He encouraged his people to commit to this community of people instead of attaching themselves too often with friends who would only weigh them down in their travel to heaven.⁵⁴

The Joy of Fighting Sin

With all of the hatred and war language that Watson used, it might be easy to misunderstand him. Watson was not saying that the Christian life is one of pain and suffering with no joy mixed in. In fact, he preached that joy is to be found *in* pain and suffering because of the promise of the eternal reward of joy in Christ. Watson taught that God receives the most glory when His children are joyous and satisfied in their obedience to Him. About the correct use of the ordinances to fight sin, Watson wrote:

Would it not be an encouragement to a subject, to hear his prince say to him, "You will honour and please me very much, if you will go to yonder mine of gold, and dig as much gold for yourself as you can carry away"? So, for God to say, "Go to the ordinances, get as much grace as you can, dig out as much salvation as you can; and the more happiness you have, the more I shall count myself glorified."⁵⁵

Watson saw the Christian's happiness in God to be both an instrument of praise to God and an instrument of ridicule to the temptations of the devil. In finding satisfaction in Christ alone, the Christian was able to preach the gospel to a lost world. When the heart was made glad by knowing God and following Him, the Christian was given assurance and peace that they were truly united to Christ. In a powerful image of redemption and holiness Watson wrote:

"The condemning power of sin is taken away when the commanding power of it is taken away. We know our sins are forgiven when they are

subdued. If a malefactor be in prison, how shall he know that his prince has pardoned him? If the jailor come and knock off his chains and fetters, and lets him out of prison, then he knows he is pardoned; so we know God has pardoned us when the fetters of sin are broken off, and we walk at liberty in the ways of God.”⁵⁶

Those whose thoughts and affections have been purified know that they have been transformed only by the grace and mercy of God. This is the sole source of joy in all of existence: to know God and be pardoned by Him. The example that Watson and his followers set directed those who were then searching for joy and meaning in the temporary pleasures of the world.

Watson on Death and Eternity

In direct opposition to the world’s perception of death, the Christian should have no fear about making the transition from a relationship with God on earth to a relationship with God in heaven. From Watson’s perspective, a Christian had nothing to lose but pain and suffering and nothing to gain but everlasting joy in seeing God as He truly is.⁵⁷ The promises of God to His children concerning their exceedingly great reward should chase away all of their fear. All of this confidence in the face of death is derived from truly knowing God and making Him the focus of existence. The gospel is the message not only of being saved from hell but being promoted to the throne room of Christ:

No cause has a pardoned soul to fear death; what needs he fear to have his body buried in the earth who has his sins buried in Christ’s wounds? What hurt can death do to him? It is but his ferryman to ferry him over to the land of promise. The day of death to a pardoned soul is his ascension-day to heaven, his coronation-day, when he shall be crowned with those delights of paradise which are unspeakable and full of glory.⁵⁸

Not only should believers be confident on the day of death, they should actually anticipate it. In the moment that life ended, Watson anticipated that all pain would be removed. This removal of pain included persecution, depression, physical pain, and various other trials. For those who were suffering, Watson encouraged them in the following argument:

“O thou saint of God, who now hankest thy harp upon the willows, and minglest thy drink with weeping, in the kingdom of heaven thy water shall be turned into wine; thou shalt have so much felicity that thy soul cannot wish for more. The sea is not so full of water as the heart of a glorified saint is of joy. There can be no more sorrow in heaven than there is joy in hell.”⁵⁹

On that day, God would remove the cross and replace it with a crown. For Watson, the separation between friends and family at death was infinitely small in comparison to the time they would spend together with Christ after death. Instead of speaking about “loosing” someone, Watson encouraged his people by saying, “That only is lost which we have no hope ever of seeing again.”⁶⁰ For him, this severance was more on scale with a friend going on a brief trip instead of moving away permanently.

Given Watson’s paradigm of the shallowness of life and the depth of eternity, he encouraged his people to commit their time to bearing fruit and storing up rewards for themselves in heaven. Instead of fretting about the unknown aspects of death, Watson urged his congregation to make use of what they did know. Of all the things that would pass away, the fruits of righteousness would endure through death and would last throughout eternity.⁶¹ He also warned his churches against the evils of idolatry. Earthly things, such as money and possessions, were given to them by God in order to aid their spiritual growth instead of impeding it. Possessions were to help the Christian preach the gospel and to help them on their way to heaven.⁶²

As stated above, Watson considered making the lost sad in their condition one of the toughest parts of his ministry. Like his own people, they failed to think about the shortness of life and the length of eternity. The main difference between the two was that the sinner had infinitely more to lose. Watson mourned the fact that so many of his countrymen sought to satisfy sinful appetites to the expense of eternal judgment. For him, death was the end of his comforts and only the beginning of sorrows. It is in this theme of his writings where some of his most vivid images can be found. Watson focused all of his creative efforts in trying to portray the desperation of lost and the wrath they would soon bear:

Oh eternity! If all the body of the earth and sea were turned to sand, and all the air up to the starry heaven were nothing but sand, and a little bird should come every thousand years, and fetch away in her bill but the tenth part of a grain of all that heap of sand, what numberless years would be spent before that vast heap of sand would be fetched away! Yet, if at the end of all that time, the sinner might come out of hell, there would be some hope; but that word “Ever” breaks the heart.⁶³

Application

Considering the themes of this article, the most practical application that can be proposed is to read books by Thomas Watson and be challenged to think about the character and power of God. Many of his books are either still in print or are coming back into print. They are filled with solid exegesis, brilliant illustrations,

and soul-satisfying theology. Readers will come away better informed about God and challenged to live a more holy life.

Another application that could be made is to consider Watson's treatment of theology as medicine. When a member or portion of his flock was struggling, he was prepared to address them with the Word. Each problem in the church had a corresponding theological solution. Watson's first priority was for the development of the mind for God. If his people could discipline their minds to think correctly, all other necessary actions would fall into place. For him, appeals to the emotions were only powerful if they were backed with the truth. This is seen most clearly in his collection of sermons on the Westminster Catechism. That book continues to be one of the best-selling books for the Banner of Truth publishing group.⁶⁴

One strategy that pastors could observe from Watson was his use of illustrations. He was constantly increasing his knowledge of all subjects and always had fresh examples with which to aid his communication. From reading Watson's sermons and books, it seems as if he believed that if he could increase the diversity of his illustrations, each listener would find at least one example that would make sense to him. From botany to life at sea, Watson saw all of history as one large picture of the goodness and power of God. Every day presented new opportunities for him to pick up new weapons with which to pierce the hearts of his people. This is one application that Charles Spurgeon made from his reading in Watson. Spurgeon considered Watson to be one of the most influential writers for his ministry. From him, Spurgeon learned to stimulate the hearts of his people for God by presenting them with vivid illustrations to contemplate. At the end of his life, Spurgeon had several books full of illustrations, quotes, and stories that could be used to foster theological growth.⁶⁵

Finally, readers of Watson should seek to imitate his confidence in the sovereignty of God. When Watson wrote of the saints' belief in the promises of God, he was writing from personal experience. Whether he was opposing a powerful political leader or trusting God in the midst of burying several of his young children, Watson truly believed that God was working all things for his good. He had an intimate, childlike knowledge of his heavenly Father and rested satisfied in His grace and protection. Watson entered eternity certain of his fate because he had spent so much time in worshiping God with his life. ☺

Notes:

¹ Even as late as March of 2009, more books are coming back into print after hundreds of years. Some of the key publishers are The Banner of Truth Trust (whose first title after its founding in 1957 was Watson's *A Body of Divinity*), Soli Deo Gloria, The Northampton Press, Christian Focus, and Christian Heritage.

² In order to concentrate mainly on the events that directly shaped Watson, a com-

prehensive history of Puritanism will not be given here. For a more detail summary, see Martin Lloyd-Jones, *The Puritans: Their Origins and Successors: Addresses Delivered at the Puritan and Westminster Conferences 1959–1978* (Edinburgh, [Lothian]: Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), and Kelly M. Kapic and Randall C. Gleason, *The Devoted Life: An Invitation to the Puritan Classics* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2004).

³ Lloyd-Jones, *The Puritans*, 239–40.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Kapic and Gleason, *The Devoted Life*, 21–22

⁶ Lloyd-Jones, *The Puritans*, 239.

⁷ Kapic and Gleason, *The Devoted Life*, 18.

⁸ The history of this strife will not be recounted here. For a summary see Kapic and Gleason, *The Devoted Life*.

⁹ This story can be found in various books from various points of view. For a shortened view see Kapic and Gleason, *The Devoted Life*, 201.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ David W. Bailey, “The Witticism as an Element of Style in the Preaching of Thomas Watson, 1998,” (An unpublished manuscript presented to the Evangelical Theological Society in Orlando, FL. Used by permission of the author), 2.

¹² Although he was an extremely brilliant man and preached impressive sermons, he was always aware of his audience. He intended to push his people to think grand thoughts of God, but he was also aware that he had to preach so that believers at all levels of spiritual growth could understand him. In an address given at the funeral of one of his fellow pastors, Watson said, “He preached intelligibly to the capacity of his assembly of hearers because he was sure that a minister would never touch the hearts of his hearers if he shot over their heads.” Thomas Watson, “Time’s Shortness” in *The Duty of Self-Denial and 10 Other Sermons* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1996), 79.

¹³ Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity in Sermons Upon the Westminster Assembly’s Catechism* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), 2.

¹⁴ Thomas Watson, *The Godly Man’s Picture, Drawn with a Scripture Pencil, or, Some Characteristic Marks of a Man Who Is Going to Heaven* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1992), 155.

¹⁵ “A good preacher, but a bad liver, is like a physician who has the plague: though the advice and prescriptions he gives may be good, yet his plague infects the patient.” Thomas Watson, “The Preciousness of the Soul” in *Thomas Watson: Pastor of St. Stephen’s Walbrook, London*, ed. Don Kistler (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 2004), 101.

¹⁶ To be fair, the Catholic Church which Watson battled most of his life was not the progressive Catholic Church of today. In almost all of his technical theology sermons/books, Watson attempts to show negative examples of abuses of Papal authority. He even delivered an entire sermon on “Roman Catholicism.” His main text was 1 Corinthians 10:14 — “Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.”

¹⁷ “It is not the receiving of meat into the mouth, but the digesting of it that makes it nutritive.” Thomas Watson, *Heaven Taken by Storm: Or, The Holy Violence a Christian Is to Put Forth in the Pursuit After Glory*, ed. Don Kistler (Orlando, FL: Northampton Press, 2007), 34. Also “The Word must not only fall as dew that wets the leaf, but as rain which soaks to the root of the tree which makes it fruitful.” Thomas Watson, *The Art of Divine Contentment* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1995), 4.

¹⁸ “The reason our affections are so chilled and cold in religion is that we do not warm them with the thoughts of God. Hold a magnifying glass to the sun, and the glass burns that which is near to it. So when our thoughts are lifted up to Christ, the Sun of

righteousness, our affections are set on fire.” Thomas Watson, *All Things for Good* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1986), 86–87.

¹⁹ These are currently printed by the Banner of Truth publishing trust in three volumes: *A Body of Divinity*, *The Ten Commandments*, and *The Lord’s Prayer*.

²⁰ “Oh, how far are they from being lovers of God, who scarcely ever think of God.” Watson, *All Things for Good*, 74.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 88.

²² “How far are they from loving God, who are not at all affected with His dishonour? A man who is dead drunk, never minds nor is affected by it, though another be bleeding to death by him; so, many, being drunk with the wine of prosperity, when the honour of God is wounded and His truths lie a bleeding, are not affected by it.” Thomas Watson, *All Things for Good*, 77.

²³ Thomas Watson, *The Doctrine of Repentance* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), 53.

²⁴ Watson, *The Godly Man’s Picture*, 245.

²⁵ Thomas Watson, *The Lord’s Prayer* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1982), 234. Watson goes on to say, “Man’s sin in comparison of God’s mercy is but as a spark to the ocean; and who would doubt whether a spark could be quenched in an ocean.” Earlier in the book, Watson writes, “What though thy sins have been heinous? The wound is not so broad as the plaister of Christ’s blood. The sea covers great rocks; the sea of God’s compassion can drown thy great sins; therefore be not discouraged, go to God, resolve to cast thyself upon His Fatherly compassion” (p.15).

²⁶ Thomas Watson, “The Soul’s Malady and Cure” in *Thomas Watson*, 179.

²⁷ As will be argued later in the paper, Watson did not use this doctrine of forgiveness as a means to live sinfully. In fact, Watson wrote an entire book on the correct, biblical way to repent.

²⁸ “He who is humbled for sin will value pardoning mercy the more. When there is nothing in the soul but clouds of sorrow, and now God brings a pardon—which is a setting up of a rainbow in the cloud, to tell the sinner that the flood of wrath shall not overflow him—oh, what joy there is at the sight of this rainbow.” Thomas Watson, *The Godly Man’s Picture*, 10.

²⁹ Watson, *All Things for Good*, 8.

³⁰ This seems to be the biblical way of viewing suffering. The Bible has much to say about the glory of God in persecution, but the reader also sees the stories of the blind man (John 9:2–3) and Lazarus (John 11). Both of them suffered not at the hands of persecutors, but of “natural causes.” Yet, Christ says that they were both put in their respective situations so that the glory of God might be advanced.

³¹ “God has one Son without sin, but no son without stripes.” Thomas Watson, *The Lord’s Prayer*, 177.

³² Thomas Watson, *The Lord’s Prayer*, 177. “The silver and jewels are sometimes cast overboard to save the passenger.” Watson, *The Art of Divine Contentment*, 35.

³³ “If a husband bestows a jewel on his wife, and she so falls in love with that jewel as to forget her husband he will take away the jewel so that her love may return to him again... If we begin to idolize it, God will take away the jewel so that our love may return to him.” Watson, *The Godly Man’s Picture*, 122.

³⁴ Watson, *The Lord’s Prayer*, 27. “The worst that God does to His children is to whip them to heaven.” Watson, *All Things for Good*, 32.

³⁵ Watson, *The Doctrine of Repentance*, 50.

³⁶ “What though he wants other things, is not Christ enough? If a man hath sun-

shine, he doth not complain he wants the light of a candle.” Thomas Watson, “Christ All in All” in *Harmless As Doves* (Fearn (Ross-shire): Christian Focus, 1993), 93.

³⁷ Watson, *The Art of Divine Contentment*, 17.

³⁸ Watson, *The Lord’s Prayer*, 280.

³⁹ Thomas Watson, *Puritan Gems, or, Wise and Holy Sayings of the Rev. Thomas Watson*, ed. John Adey (London: J. Snow, Ward and Co., 1850), 29–30. “A bee may sting through the skin, but it cannot sting to the heart. Outward afflictions cannot sting to a Christian’s heart where contentment lies. Thieves may plunder us of our money and silver, but not of this pearl of contentment, unless we are willing to part with it; for it is locked up in the cabinet of the heart. The soul which is possessed of this rich treasure of contentment is like Noah in the ark, who can sing in the midst of a deluge.” Watson, *The Art of Divine Contentment*, 20.

⁴⁰ Watson, *The Doctrine of Repentance*, 8.

⁴¹ Watson, *Heaven Taken by Storm*, 69.

⁴² Watson, “The Righteous Man’s Weal and the Wicked Man’s Woe” in *The Duty of Self-Denial*, 56.

⁴³ Watson, *The Doctrine of Repentance*, 81.

⁴⁴ An adaptation of Watson quote “Christ is never loved till sin be loathed.” Also “So, let us say, Is not this the sin that poured out Christ’s blood? Let our hearts be enraged against sin, When the Senators of Rome showed the people Caesar’s bloody robe, they were incensed against them who slew him. Sin has rent the white robe of Christ’s flesh, and dyed it a crimson colour; let us seek to be avenged of our sins. Under the law, if an ox gored a man, so that he died, the ox was to be killed. Sin has pierced and gored our Saviour: let it die the death. What a pity it is that that should live which would not suffer Christ to live!” Watson, *The Lord’s Supper*, 29.

⁴⁵ “They who pray that they may not be led into temptation must not lead themselves into temptation.” Watson, *Heaven Taken by Storm*, 13.

⁴⁶ Watson, *The Lord’s Prayer*, 118. It should be noted that Watson does not take the story in context or raise the main point of the story. In fact, that was not his goal. Watson is not arguing that Uriah was sinful or that he deserved to be sent to the front. He believed that his people would be familiar with the story and that he could use the image of being on the front line to describe the believer’s attitude toward sin. Watson does this numerous times in his writings.

⁴⁷ I am not here arguing that there is no room for critique of the Puritans. Certainly there were pastors, as in every generation, who beat their sheep too often when they should have been nursed and fed. Unfortunately, many contemporary readers make hasty judgments on all Puritans based only on anecdotal evidence instead of actually giving them a chance.

⁴⁸ Watson, *The Lord’s Prayer*, 291.

⁴⁹ “Oh, that every day some limb of the old man may drop off!” Thomas Watson, *The Mischief of Sin* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1994), 50–51.

⁵⁰ Watson, *The Duty of Self-Denial*, 9. “Let not any man say he is called of God, that lives in sin. Has God called you to be a swearer, to be a drunkard? Nay, let not the merely moral person say he is effectually called. What is civility without sanctity? It is but a dead carcass strewed with flowers.” Watson, *All Things for Good*, 108.

⁵¹ Watson, *All Things for Good*, 23.

⁵² “He who travels a road where there is robbing will be sure to ride with his sword; we are traveling to heaven, and in this road there is a thief who always besets us in every place where we go.” Watson, *The Lord’s Prayer*, 295. Don’t miss the sword imagery here.

⁵³ Watson, "The Beauty of Grace" in *Thomas Watson*, 91.

⁵⁴ "If you mingle bright and rusty metal together, the rusty metal will not be made bright, but the bright will become rusty. So an evil companion who is rusted with sin will always rub some of his unholy rust upon a man who is bright with grace." Watson, "Spiritual Watch" in *Thomas Watson*, 215. This is not to say that Watson was in favor of total separation from the world. He himself sought opportunities to influence the lost and share Christ with them. He was concerned more that his people would be influenced instead of doing the influence.

⁵⁵ Watson, *A Body of Divinity*, 14. While the idea behind "Christian Hedonism" is as old as Christianity itself, it has become more popular for the current generation through the ministries of such men as John Piper and C.J. Mahaney. Both of these men, and everyone else who advocates the paradigm, willingly admit that these ideas are not new to them. The development and articulation of this system can be traced back to the Puritans. Watson also comments on the happiness of obeying God by saying, "To a saint, Christ's laws are no more burdensome than wings to a bird." Watson, *The Lord's Prayer*, 114.

⁵⁶ Watson, *The Lord's Prayer*, 239. If there is one quote or image that contemporary authors and speakers use from Watson, this is it.

⁵⁷ "Death may take away a few worldly comforts, but it gives that which is better; it takes away a flower and gives a jewel; it takes away a short lease and gives land of inheritance. If the saints possess a kingdom when they die, they have no cause to fear death. A prince would not be afraid to cross the sea, though tempestuous, if he were sure to be crowned as soon as he came to shore." Watson, *The Lord's Prayer*, 101.

⁵⁸ Watson, *The Lord's Prayer*, 246–247.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 87. Watson also wrote, "Death is the handkerchief to wipe away all tears." Watson, "The Saints Desire to Be with Christ" in *Thomas Watson*, 114.

⁶⁰ Watson, *The Godly Man's Picture*, 122.

⁶¹ "Death, like a whirlwind, may blow down the tree of the body, but it cannot blast the fruit of our graces. The trees of righteousness carry their fruit with them." Watson, "The Trees of Righteousness Blossoming" in *Thomas Watson*, 205.

⁶² "Let us so possess things temporal, that we do not lose things eternal." Watson, *The Lord's Prayer*, 104. Also "Water is useful to the ship and helps it to sail better to the haven, but let the water get into the ship, if it is not pumped out, it drowns the ship. So riches are useful and convenient for our passage. We sail more comfortably with them through the troubles of this world; but if the water gets into the ship, if the love of riches gets into the heart, then we are drowned by them." Watson, "A Christian in Heaven Still on Earth" in *Thomas Watson*, 13.

⁶³ Watson, *A Body of Divinity*, 63. Concerning hell, Watson also wrote, "No, if the damned had lain in hell as many thousand years as there are drops in the sea, eternity as yet to begin." Watson, *All Things for Good*, 153.

⁶⁴ Watson, *A Body of Divinity*, back cover.

⁶⁵ Charles Spurgeon, "A Brief Memoir of Thomas Watson" in *A Body of Divinity*, vii–xii.

A Sermon to Preachers

B. H. Carroll

Delivered before the Baptist General Convention of Texas, at Belton, October 7, 1892, and reproduced here by the courtesy of the American Baptist Publication Society.

This sermon is from a collection of sermons on *Jesus the Christ* compiled by J. W. Crowder, edited by J. B. Cranfill, published in 1937 by Baird-Ward Press, Nashville, TN.

Text: I magnify mine office (Romans 11:13).

However far, and by whatever license a minister may depart from the primary meaning of a text in its immediate connection, it is always obligatory that he should first give the primary and contextual import and then explain how the general principle contained in it may be safely applied to all his deductions from it. In the present case the connection is this: The Apostle seems to anticipate an objection in the minds of the Gentiles whom he addresses, that, he, their apostle, should manifest such concern for the salvation of the Jews. He justifies his solitude for the redemption of his Jewish brethren, though he is an apostle to the Gentiles, and even magnifies his office as their apostle that by their glorious success in the gospel the Jews may be excited to emulation and thereby some of them be saved. He argues that, if the Gentiles derived benefit from the fall of the Jews, they would derive yet more by their recovery. Nor does he content himself with the salvation of only “some of them.” He looks to the salvation of the whole Jewish nation and to this end he speaks in the text and its connections: “But I speak to you that are Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle of the Gentiles, I glorify my ministry; if by any means I may provoke to emulation them that are my flesh.”

But while this is the primary meaning of the text, in its connections it embodies a great principle of wider application. It is this great principle which burns in my heart and which I feel impelled to discuss before this Convention. The fairness and safety of this wider application may be gathered from the first Scripture read—Ephesians 4:11–16—in which it is alleged that God gave apostles, pastors, teachers, and evangelists for the same glorious purpose. Therefore, if the office of one is to be magnified, so the office of the others to the same end. Hence the theme: **The office of a minister must be magnified—glorified always, everywhere, and by all incumbents.**

I. The Office

First impress on your minds the fact that the work of the ministry is official. It is an office in the true and common acceptance of that term. Let us define: Webster's International Dictionary says: "Office—a special duty, trust, charge or position, conferred by authority for a public purpose; a position of trust or authority; as an executive or judicial office; a municipal office. A charge or trust of sacred nature, conferred by God Himself; as, the office of a priest under the old dispensation, and that of the apostles in the new," quoting our text as an example. Mark the essential elements of an office. The duty, trust or charge is special. It is conferred by authority. It is for a public purpose. In the case of a religious office, the trust is sacred and God himself confers it. While in civil affairs it is the duty of every citizen to do all in his power toward the enforcement of law and the preservation of order, certain functions devolve exclusively on officers appointed for the purpose. A private citizen cannot perform the official duties of the sheriff, judge, governor or president. So in the church and kingdom of Christ. While it is the privilege of every Christian to tell the story of the cross and to otherwise aid in the dissemination of the gospel, yet in magnifying individual duties and privileges let it never be forgotten that God has called out a special class of men and set them apart officially and committed to them certain official duties. "This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." The truth of the proposition just set forth is more recognized than realized. Let us impress ourselves with it by carefully reconsidering some things well known to all of us.

1. The terms by which God designates His ministers not only indicate office but suggest the nature of the office and its duties. In many places the minister is called a shepherd. A shepherd performs special duties committed to him alone. He must watch over the flock, feed them when hungry, heal them when sick, guard them in peril, keep them from worries and alarms, and shelter them in the fold. He is called a bishop, which means an overseer. The overseer has special duty and authority. He directs the labor of those he oversees. He is called a steward, one who holds in trust the goods or business of another and who acts for his principal, as an agent in the matter committed to him. He is called an ambassador, a term which implies official functions. The ambassador acts by special appointment, under definite instructions, and carries credentials authenticating his mission. There are other terms of similar purport.

2. The form or ceremony by which the minister is set apart to his work indicates an office. He is separated to this work by prayer and laying on of the hands of the presbytery (Acts 13:2,3; 1 Timothy 4:14).

3. The special provision made for this support indicates an office (1 Corinthians 9:1–14). As there is a salary for the governor of a state, or the sheriff of a county, or a soldier in the army, so the Lord hath ordained that they who preach

the gospel should live of the gospel. Now it is evident that all Christians cannot live of the gospel—cannot be put on a salary out of the common fund. The fact, therefore, that special provision is made for the financial and material support of a certain class who devote their time and labor to a solemn trust for the public benefit is a demonstration that such class are in office. There is no escape from this alternative: Either the preacher is an object of charity in receiving pecuniary aid from his congregation, or he receives it in compensation for official duties.

4. Ministerial responsibility is proof of office. I mean to say that there is a responsibility laid on every preacher that does not rest on any private member of the church, and that in the great day of account he must answer to God for the manner in which he has discharged his official duties.

Now, by these four facts—the terms employed to designate his work, the form by which he is set apart to that work, the provision made for his support while engaged in it, and his responsibility for its performance, it is demonstrable that the fills an office in the ordinary sense of the word and the duties of such office are in contradistinction to the duties of private members of the church. These private members are not called shepherds, bishops, ambassadors, nor even stewards, in the sense that he is a steward. They are not ordained. They rely upon their secular business for a support. They have not his responsibility.

II. Why The Office Should Be Magnified

1. Because of Him who appoints. The dignity of every office is measured largely by the dignity of the appointing power. The servant is not above his master. When one holds an official position under the commission of a king, that royal signature ennobles every official action performed under its authority and confers on it the royal sanction, however paltry it may seem in itself. But what earthly potentate can be compared in majesty with the King of kings and Lord of lords, who as the eternal God, Himself specially calls every man, appoints every man, and sends forth under His supreme authority every man who lawfully enters the ministry? How does such a commission, handed down from the Supreme Court of Heaven, infinitely transcend in majesty and dignity any commission issued by any lower court, so finite in time and power!

The divine Lord of the harvest sends forth His laborers into the harvest. He separates them from the masses of Christian people. He kindles on the altar of their hearts an unquenchable desire to preach His gospel. He counts it as rendered to Himself the treatment they receive. An audience given to them is given to Him. Their message scorned is His message scorned. Therefore, every minister should magnify his office.

2. This office should be magnified because of the work involved in it. What is the minister to do? For what service is he commissioned? Even those in high

authority sometimes necessarily commission their servants to perform trifling and unimportant services. But is such your work, my brethren? Let us re-read our commission tonight. The Scriptures* which introduced this service tell their own story. They were earnestly and solemnly read—were they reverently heard? By them our work is divided into two distinct parts—reconciliation and edification. The reconciliation of sinners to God—the upbuilding of the reconciled in their most holy faith. How awful the responsibility, how solemn the obligation, how important the service of carrying to the lost the word and hope of eternal life! Salvation! Salvation! How much it means! Life! Eternal Life! What is thy purport? Hear what was said to one of the early preachers:

“I send thee to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith that is in me” (Acts 26:17,18). What privation of the lost is here disclosed! What subjection! What guilt! What bankruptcy! What homelessness! They are blind. Night overshadows them. Satan has bound them hand and foot. His cloven foot presses their quivering hearts. They are without God and hope in the world. They are condemned and the sword of execution hangs over them suspended by one brittle thread. They are heirs to an inheritance of despair.

And what service does the minister render to them! He brings sight for blindness; light for darkness; forgiveness for guilt; hope for despair; a heavenly inheritance for spiritual bankruptcy; fatherhood for orphanage; and thrusts back the triumphant devil from off the prostrate victim and stands him up unshackled before God, “redeemed, regenerated and disenthralled.”

Hear that same early preacher tell of this part of his work: “And hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:18–20). Oh, the enmity of man against God! Oh, the sweetness of reconciliation! And “How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things.”

Beautiful feet! Though bare, and bruised, and bleeding, and swollen, and dust-covered. Beautiful feet! When thy Saviour has girded Himself and washed them shall they evermore walk on a less holy mission? My brother in the ministry, is this trifling work?

* Scriptures read: Ephesians 4:11–16; Acts 20:28–32; 1 Peter 5:1–4; 1 Corinthians 4:1–2; 2 Corinthians 2:14–17; 3:1–12; 4:1–7; 5:18–20; 1 Timothy 1:12,13; 4:12–16; 2 Timothy 2:1–7; 4:1–8.

And how like it, in importance, is the other part? “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). “... Feed my lambs.... Feed my sheep” (John 21:15, 16). “And he gave some, apostles; pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love (Ephesians 4:11–16).

Ministers of God, have you studied these Scriptures? Have you gauged these responsibilities? Have you measured these duties? My brethren, let our bare hearts be the targets of the fiery arrows of interrogation: Are any sheep of our flock hungry? Is any lamb astray? Are wolves howling around the fold committed to our care? Are any laborers idle under our oversight? Are the “babes in Christ” in our charge growing? Have you heard any of them crying for the “sincere milk of the word,” while you crammed them with solid food they were unable to digest? Are our people unified in the faith? Are any of the young converts tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine? Are they at the mercy of every theological tramp, who, for revenue, seeks to sidetrack them from their straight road of service? Are they a prey to religious cranks, who poison them with patent nostrums and quack medicines? Is the body over which you preside fitly joined together? Does every joint supply compactness? Does every part work effectually? Does the body increase? Is it edified? O watchman, have you blown the trumpet at the coming of the sword?

My brethren in the ministry, was this Scripture written for our sakes: “Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered” (Ezekiel 34:2–5).

And under our mismanagement has it become necessary for God to “judge between cattle and cattle”? Have we allowed some of the flock to “eat up the good

pasture and tread the residue under their feet—to drink the water and foul the residue with their feet”?

Have we stood cowardly silent while some “have thrust with side and shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with their horns, till they are scattered abroad”? Oh, “when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, shall we receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away”? Brethren, I press this question: Are not reconciliation and edification work enough? And should we not magnify our office because of the work?

3. This office is to be magnified because of the extraordinary means appointed for the accomplishing of the work of reconciliation and edification. I waste no words on the Koran nor the Book of Mormon. I mention no vagaries of human speculation, nor hallucinations of earthy philosophy. I hold up no glow-worm light of science. I speak not of the Constitution of the United States nor of any statues evolved from it. But I do speak of the inspired Word of God as the instrument appointed for reconciliation and edification. When we consider this inspired volume as the means of glorifying his office placed in the preacher’s hands, we would not dare mention in comparison the office of the Supreme Court of the United States, which expounds only the principles of earthly jurisprudence. Let them quote Blackstone and Kent. Let them painfully and laboriously gather up the doubtful opinions of dead men—that is their business. But the man of God takes a Word inviolable and infallible—which has breathed on those who wrote it; this must he expound and illustrate. It is the Word which God at sundry times and in diverse manner, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets and in these last days by His Son. This Word is “quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” This “Word of the Lord endureth forever.” It is brighter and more potent than the light of all the heavenly bodies (Psalm 19). It is more credible than a visitor from the dead (Luke 16:28–31). It is surer than the evidences of the senses (2 Peter 1:13–19). Therefore, the preacher is “charged”; that is, put on his oath, “before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom, to preach the word” (2 Timothy 4:1). Such extraordinary and potential means would not have been provided for an office that men could refuse to magnify.

4. The office should be magnified because of Him who accompanies the official and gives efficacy to his words. I speak of the Holy Spirit, whose presence and power constitute the only guarantee of ministerial success. Paul may plant and Apollos water, but God alone gives the increase. To what earthly office, however great, are such presence and power attached? The minister is a “laborer together with God.” No reverent mind can think of this presence and power, and depreciate the office which they sanctify and energize.

5. The office is to be magnified on account of the extraordinary qualifications required of the officer—qualifications mental, moral and spiritual. I maintain that there is no other office among men that calls for the kind and degree of qualifications which God's Word requires for the ministerial office. He must have gifts, graces, and character such as no human law requires for any earthly office. While the measure of his knowledge and scholarly education is not prescribed, he must be apt to teach. Without this aptness he never can be a preacher.

He must wrap himself in a mantle of personal purity whiter than the ermine of a judge. The mantle no minister can smirch with impunity. He must be unspotted before the world and must preserve a good report of them that are without. He may as well resign when the world seriously questions his sincerity or his morals. In an age of mammon, while the world bows before its golden calf, he must not be covetous. "Not for filthy lucre" must he take charge of any flock. While other men hate and fight, he must be no "striker or brawler." His spiritual qualifications are yet higher. He must be full of the Holy Spirit. He is the instrument of the Spirit. He must ever yield to the monition of the Spirit.

Therefore, because of his extraordinary appointment, because of his extraordinary work, because of the extraordinary means furnished him, because of the extraordinary presence, and because of the extraordinary qualifications required, it is demonstrable that this office should be magnified above every other office. We now come to the main question:

III. How Shall The Office Be Magnified?

Brethren,—I feel pressed in spirit tonight when I look out over this audience—among whom are so many ministers, so many older than myself, so many of longer service in the ministry. And I speak with great diffidence, but I do desire to express very earnestly and without the slightest reservation my own deep and abiding convictions concerning the truth of God as I understand it, in answering the question how all ministers may magnify their office.

1. By a profound realization of its importance. Pardon a personal reference, for men only theorize when they go beyond their personal experience. In delivering addresses on other subjects, I have been singularly free from embarrassment, but I never stand up to preach without trembling. It is not stagefright, for perhaps I esteem too slightly the judgment of men and women, whether expressed in praise or censure. But there is something about preaching which affects me even more than the approach of death. I never refuse to preach on any proper occasion when invited—I love to preach. I was not driven into the ministry. I never fled from God's message, like Jonah. I never hide behind modest apologies, but I never in my life stood up to preach except once—which exception I profoundly regret—without first isolating myself from all human company, even the dearest,

and prostrating myself in spirit before the dread and awful God, imploring Him, in deepest humility, to bless me that one time.

Perhaps I am wrong. I would not judge harshly, but I cannot rid myself of the conviction that a man who can lightly, who can arrogantly, who can with seeming effrontery of manner, get up in the pulpit, get up unstagged with the weight of responsibility resting on him, get up as an ambassador for God, as if God was his ambassador, is disqualified for the holy office.

Just think of it seriously. Eternal interests hinge on every sermon. Every sentence may be freighted with eternal weal or woe. Every word may be the savor of life unto life or of death unto death. Would any one of deep moral sense deliver idly or lightly even a political oration if every word uttered might be a death sentence? What must be his moral character, what the turpitude of his nature, if he was more concerned to display his wit or logic or eloquence than to measure the effect of his speech on human suffering or joy!

But can such trifling, however selfish, compare with his, who, standing up for God in matters which cost the life of Christ and engaged the attention of the three worlds—men, angels and devils—who stands up as Heaven's agent to dispense terms of life and conditions of pardon, or to denounce eternal judgments, and there poses as a wit or attitudinizes as a rhetorician, or plays the actor, as if the whole service were a theatrical display and heaven and hell were but scenic paintings to accentuate his dramatic talent!

Therefore, the impression never leaves me that no irreverent man should ever dare preach. I do not care how much he knows, nor how well he can declaim, nor how many his admirers. I shudder—cold chills of apprehension creep over me when I hear him.

Is it the office of a mountebank? Is it the vocation of a circus clown? Is it the lifework of a privileged jester? Oh, the agony of Paul's question: "Who is sufficient for these things?"! Oh, the richness of this experience: "I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power"! If one of you were commissioned to give directions of safety to a crowd of men, women and children standing on a quivering sandbank—encircled by an ever-rising flood, which moment by moment encroached on the narrow space where they stood, and your word meant life or death to every strong man, to every loving woman, to every clinging child, would you, could you—how could you, standing on a safe shore, speak those words in the carefully practiced declamation of a rhetorician?

Did you ever in your life hear of a preacher noted for habitually reaching souls, for leading thousands to Christ, who stood before a mirror and studied the postures and gesticulations with which to ornament his sermons? I submit to

you, if your own interest has not slackened, if your spiritual nature has not been shocked, every time you detected art in the preacher's declamation?

I would not depreciate proper culture of voice or manner, but I do believe that if you realize the importance of your work, and forget yourself in it—if the great deep of your own soul is moved upon by the Spirit of God—your manner and gesticulation will take care of themselves.

2. Profound and abiding gratitude to God for putting you in the ministry will help you to magnify your office. Your heart must gratefully appreciate that you, a worm as other men—that you, not on account of your own merit—you, from among thousands naturally as good—and perhaps better by grace—you were selected by the Divine Master for this distinguished honor; as much higher above the crowns of earth as the stars in heaven are above their reflection in a well.

How can I ever forget the impression made on my heart, or get beyond its influences on my life, when I heard Doctor Broadus at Jefferson, Texas, in the Southern Baptist Convention, preach from the text: “I thank Christ Jesus, my Lord, for that he hath enabled me, putting me into the ministry”?

Let thy call to preach unseal a ceaselessly flowing fountain of gratitude. Rejoice in the honor conferred on you. You who desire to magnify your office, let me pass the question around and press its point on every heart: Are you glad you are a preacher? Are you? Are you grateful? Do you thank Him? Do you appreciate it as a priceless treasure?

3. You can magnify your office by studying; that is, being diligent, “To show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the work of truth.”

This diligence applies to every department of ministerial work, and therefore includes a profound acquaintance with all the revealed will of God in its proper order and relation. This knowledge, and the use made of it, must be “unto the approval of God,” and not of man. But how can a man magnify his office who is too lazy to study that Word which it is his business to preach—who lives year after year in ignorance of the very rudiments of Bible-teaching—who has not studied that sacred library, book by book, and chapter by chapter? I refer not so much to mere mental study as to heart study. I mean such study as places the heart against every Bible doctrine, and prays: “Lord God, filtrate into my heart the very essence of this doctrine—let me receive into my soul experimentally just what is the mind of the Spirit; let me so assimilate it as food that it will be a part of my being; let me not only know it but be nourished by it.”

I knew a young preacher who bade fair, in his youth to eclipse all competitors. Endowed with a wonderful fluency of speech, captivating address, a vast amount of magnetism, as a boy preacher he so captured his admiring crowd that he began to imagine he “had the world in a sling.” Much concerned about the permanency of his usefulness, I paid him a special visit and said: “My boy, you have no books. I

never see you studying the Bible. You are ignorant of the great body of its teachings. You seem not to understand it as a system of truth, fitly correlated in all its parts. You preach without investigation, on such striking passages here and there as in the English version impress you by their sound. What are you going to do after a while? You will soon use up this emotional power on which you rely. You go around as an evangelist, preaching over and over the same old sermons, using the same old illustrations, because your audiences are different. But have you considered this: That these sermons and illustrations by frequent use will become tame to you? Their lack of freshness will kill your own interest in them. They will lose the good taste, even in your own mouth. Then they will have no power over the people. You are fast approaching shipwreck as a useful preacher. Your doom is to join the crowd of soreheads and growlers who complain that they are not appreciated, unless you study, study, study! If you like, I will make out for you a list of books, with some suggestions as to their use, and if you are not able to buy them I will see that you get them."

Perhaps you are curious to know the result. Well, he did not appreciate my proffered counsel or help. He seemed to think that I was jealous of his power and wanted to handicap him. If he ever studied, I never heard of it. He did join the growlers. He never stays longer than two years with any church, because in that time he tells all he knows and some things he doesn't know. The rose color and glamour of a new field of labor, where he can use the old material, entices him away. He criticizes the management of Boards and denominational enterprises, and talks much of "rings and bosses and favorites," and complains that the old-fashioned gospel is superseded by new-fangled notions.

My brother, if you would magnify your office, make the Word of God your life-study. Let down your buckets into the wells of salvation; lengthen your cords and let them down deep, and draw up the water fresh and sparkling every day, and give it out freely to your thirsty congregations. Burn all your written sermons that you carry around in your valise. Don't you know that when you keep gnawing the same sermons they become like what a wolf leaves of a once juicy antelope—dry bones?

An unchanged sermon never suits two congregations. Conditions vary. Be fresh. Be flexible. Learn proper adjustments. Study the needs of the people before you, and preach from a full heart that within that very hour has sought the Spirit's guidance as to the theme and the Spirit's power as to utterance.

4. You can magnify your office by giving yourself wholly to it. No man should give himself wholly to a work that is too scant in character and too small in volume to call out and employ all his reserve force, and to develop to their full capacity every faculty of his being. But in the ministry God has committed to a man an office as high as heaven, as deep as hell, as broad as space. There is a broad margin for all his powers. There is room enough for all possible development in all directions.

Let me again refer to myself. When I was converted I was making two thousand five hundred dollars a year—more than I have ever received since. I was ambitious of distinction and promotion. I had luxurious tastes and wonderful appreciation of conveniences. Now, to abandon all this pride, ambition and prospect of luxury, to come down to a few hundreds a year, grudgingly given, was very grinding to my sensitiveness. But the crisis was one for solution. I determined never to be burdened with its solution but once. Without a dollar in my pocket or in sight; with a wife, baby and feather bed as the sum total of earthly possessions, I settled that question once and for all.

I made a solemn covenant with God, that while I lived I would never have any other business or profession or calling than to preach the gospel—to give myself wholly to that, “sink or swim, live or die, survive or perish,” to turn back to any other, NEVER, NEVER, NEVER, FOREVER. I learned to see that it was a small matter if I did die. I remembered the Master’s words: “He that loseth his life for my sake, and the Gospel’s, shall find it; and he that findeth his life shall lose it.”

Indeed, it might be the best for me to die. It might be the best that I should starve to death. I didn’t know. Who can tell? But I was certain that whether I starved or fattened it was my duty to preach the gospel.

My brother, take home to thyself the charge of Paul to Timothy: “Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of hands of the presbytery. Meditate on these things; give thyself wholly to them.”

How is it you can undertake so many lifeworks? I call upon you to interpret this Scripture: “No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of life.” Is it addressed to a preacher? You cannot deny it. Is it not directly in connection with the charge to Timothy to “commit to faithful men, who shall be able to instruct others also” the things which he had heard and learned? You cannot deny it. Does it not fairly apply to preachers of today? You cannot deny it: Then will you answer candidly to your own heart and to God: Are you so entangled? Does the entanglement help you as a preacher? Are you content to remain so?

Not long ago I said to a beautiful and brilliant wife that her husband had descended when he left the pulpit to be just a governor. Magnify this office above every other office. If it is an anti-climax to stoop from Mont Blanc to a molehill, how much more for a preacher to vacate an office higher than that of a field-marshal, president or king, to seek a subordinate position in politics or commerce.

The lustre of all the diamonds in the diadems of kingly crowns pales before God’s promised reward to the minister: “They that be wise shall shine as the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever.”

You can magnify this office by regarding God’s interests, solemnly committed to you, as transcendentally above place and congregation and world. This is a hard saying. I know it by experience. How seductive the temptation to a preacher

to yield to selfish considerations as to where he shall preach and what he shall preach! The preacher is included in the “mankind” so graphically pictured by Robert Burns:

Ouch! Mankind is unco’ weak,
And little to be trusted,
If self the wavering balance touch,
’Tis rarely right adjusted.

And how most shameful of all the weakness when he gets in front of the Cross and hides it from the people to show off himself!

Some years ago I invited a minister to preach for me the following Sunday. He came with a valise full of written sermons on various sensational topics. He read over to me about a dozen of them—who can doubt my patience in view of it?—and asked me, the pastor of the flock, which one would make the most favorable impression for him on my congregation. I turned on him in scorn and said: “That matter is one of supreme indifference to my people. I wanted you to so preach from an humble, full and loving heart of our Divine Redeemer as to make a favorable impression for Him, but as no man can preach Jesus when self fills his vision, I withdraw my invitation for you to occupy my pulpit.” He did not preach for me then, nor has he since. And I am glad he is out of Texas and out of the Baptist denomination.

At another time I heard one of our greatest Texas ministers preach a sermon of marked simplicity, of the sweetest humility, and of tremendous power. And as it was on a topic peculiarly suited to the needs of my own congregation, I urged him to come and preach it for us. We needed it just then. I knew it would do us good. Well, he came, but when he looked out over the upturned faces, when he saw among many prominent men a host of university students, he concluded that the sermon I asked him to preach was much too homely for the occasion, and without consulting me, delivered instead one of his early sophomore sermons. Oh, it was full of stardust and diamond-lustre and rhetorical sheen, excusable, perhaps, in an inexperienced boy, but simply ridiculous from him on that grand occasion. It was the most mortifying failure of his life. The people were sorely disgusted and disappointed. They insisted that I didn’t know who could preach, and suggested to me to leave such matters to the deacons. The hungry who came for bread had to content themselves with a bouquet of artificial flowers. The sad-hearted who came for consolation were treated to a display of literary fireworks, and the lost who were seeking a Saviour’s face found only a work-painter. But more than all others was he hurt by it. It seemed to crush him to the earth and grind him to powder. Being a good man, his penitence was swift and profound. He spent the afternoon in tears and prayer. At night he preached a sermon that it seemed would melt a

stone, but alas! the audience of the morning was not there to hear him. Nor was he ever afterward able to get out much of a congregation in that place.

The temptation sometimes comes in another form, wafted on the seductive breath of flattery. People “with itching ears,” who cannot endure sound doctrine and holy living, will come with honeyed words about his “broadness” and “liberal-ity”. “He is no moss-back,” no “straight-jacket”. “He belongs to higher culture and criticism”.

Ah, me! if the preacher drinks once of this intoxicating champagne, you may count the days till he hearts the gospel as a squirrel hearts an acorn, leaving only a shattered shell, without even a germ of life.

It sometimes comes in the growls of his congregation. “He presses some things too much.” “He urges too many collections.” “He has too much zeal.” Woe to him and to his people if he heed the growling!

It sometimes comes in the clamor for short, soothing and soporific sermons, about fifteen minutes long.

Let me tell you of a case: In a city once, I went to hear a sermon. Preachers get hungry to hear others preach. I was oppressed in spirit and gravely solicitous about a great matter. I wanted my faith strengthened. Quietly taking my seat, I listened. The rendition of the music, confined exclusively to the choir, was very artistic, I suppose. I held myself in reserve for the sermon. That, I took it for granted, would have body to it. The preacher rose, at last, with his sermon in his hand. I looked at it. It was a neat essay, on note-paper, gilt-edged, and perfumed, I verily believe. I know it was tied with a delicately shaded ribbon, and he gracefully read the dainty document through in just fifteen minutes; and that seemed to me too much for it. My sensations were never paralleled except once when, on a moonlight night, I stepped confidently upon what I supposed was a plank, and found it a sluice of muddy water fully knee-deep.

Some one asked me what I thought about the sermon. Perhaps my disappointment made me say: “Well, I’ve figured it out, and if there is no mistake in my calculation, it would take eight hundred and seventy nine thousand, three hundred and sixteen years for five hundred seventy-eight thousand, three hundred and fourteen such sermons to reach one soul, and then they would make no more impression on it than a cloud of thistle-down blown by human breath against the granite face of Mont Blanc. I think it might safely pass through Texas from Sabine Pass to El Paso, and no Baptist, if all the General Convention were out hunting for a sermon, would fire a shot at it.”

But usually the preacher fails most in loyalty to God’s interest, both local and general, when fears about the payment of his own salary, and cowardly deference to local pressure induce him to isolate his church from co-operation with sister churches in general denominational enterprises, when he shuts off from his people that information of general affairs and those appeals which are necessary to educa-

tion and intelligent co-operation. The church thus isolated becomes narrow and selfish in policy and prosperity. God's cause is one, whether in town or in country, at home or abroad. The city churches should never fail to be represented in the district Associations. They should bind the country churches to them with indissoluble bonds of fraternity and reciprocity. It is weakness to yield to the selfish cry: "Too many collections, too many agents." It is easy to be silent when he should cry aloud and spare not. But his tower of strength is honeycombed in its foundation when he allows a perverted sensitiveness in the church or the world to put a padlock on his lips.

Let me emphasize a sentence: In the general denominational enterprises, everything depends on the preachers. They are the bishops who direct and oversee the labors of the churches. If they are silent, the churches will be silent. If you ever make a canvass for a general denominational interest, as I have done, you will know that as is the preacher, so is the church. You will find, whether you canvass for home, foreign or Sunday school missions, or education or orphanage, that your greatest obstacle is preachers, and your greatest help preachers. How can a stranger, who respects the sanctity of the pastoral office, do anything to advantage in a sovereign Baptist church if the pastor is even apathetic, much less adverse?

I say now to you all, every one of you, charged with a general work by the State Convention, that where the local preacher loves your work and honors you in your devotion to it, where he prayerfully, lovingly, tenderly, and with all his might, supports you, there you will succeed. Not elsewhere to any great extent. If he leaves out the interest you represent, the church will let him leave it out. There is a spiritual sensitiveness that has keener and swifter perception than intuition, which informs every agent of a general work whether the preacher is for him or against him.

I repeat, everything depends on the preachers, even quarrels and divisions. When was there ever a division of a church or Association or Convention, and a preacher not in it? Who knows of even one? Oh, if God's interests be not esteemed by the preacher above his own selfishness or cowardice, above the flattery or growling of the church, above the praise or censure of the world, how can the man magnify his office?

How vividly do I recall the crisis of my own pastoral life on this very point, when called to the responsible charge of Waco Church, twenty-two years ago! I greatly distrusted my fitness for the important position. I was young and inexperienced. The church had great and wise men in it. But fortunately I remembered that God was greater and wiser than all; that my responsibility to Him supreme. I made up my mind fully, once for all. I told the brethren that perhaps they had made a mistake. Time would show; that I had nothing to say about my own salary then or afterward. They must care for that. That my duty was to preach and teach the necessity of coming up to a high mark on every local and every denomina-

tional work. That I would do this at all hazards. That the cord which bound us as pastor and people should be a rope of sand when they wanted it broken, but a cable as long as they desired it to hold. That the hazard of loosing my pastorate should not be regarded as even fine dust in the balance. There is no other safe or righteous course for any pastor.

Finally, you may magnify your office by continually renewing your consecration. When you enter this *office*, and so long as you are in it, over how much of you do you consent that God should write His name and put the obligation of exclusive service? Do you say: "Lord Jesus, Thou hast put me into Thy ministry. I am but a little child. I know not how to go out or to come in. I am unworthy of so great honor. I shall surely fail if Thou art not with me. What I am to do, how I am to do it, and where I go, do Thou choose for me; only be Thou with me. It seems, Good Master, that every part of me has been washed whiter than snow in Thy cleansing blood, every part of me subject of divine grace, every part of me redeemed by Thy power and love and dying groans. But Lord Jesus, if Thou canst find any part of me that the blood has not touched, then write not Thy name on that lost part. But over every part the blood has touched, there write Thy name, whether brain, or eye, or ear, or hand, or heart, or mouth, or foot, over ALL, ALL OVER ALL, write Thy name of authority and ownership forever. Let me be Thy faithful servant in time, and thy welcome servant in eternity."

To illustrate this consecration: At the examination of a candidate for ordination I once heard a deacon ask this question: "In going into this work, have you burned the bridges behind you or only taken up the planks with a view to re-laying them in case you should want to cross back to secular affairs?" I thought it a wonderfully pertinent question that went to the heart of the matter. It is better for the preacher never to even look backward toward the place where the bridge once stood. And never let him seek to please himself as to where he shall preach. Let the Lord of the harvest determine the where as well as the what and how.

Turn not a longing eye to big churches and fat salaries.

Let the Master say where, whether under burning skies in Africa's malarial jungles, or where "wolves are howling on lone Onalaska's shore." This consecration involves that you fully trust Him for material support and spiritual power.

Be not faithless. The Master points you to the lilies and sparrows. You are more valuable than they. He tells you that "verily you shall be clothed and you shall be fed." Not a hair of your head shall perish. He will care for your wife and children if you trustingly serve Him.

I do not say trust the brethren. That is a broken reed. But to deny that Jesus will keep His promise to you is to deny the veracity of God. Trust Him for your power.

Even today I had a talk with a young brother staggering under the responsibility of presenting a great work tomorrow. His eyes were full of tears, as he said:

"I have no strength at all for this great service." I laid my hand on him and said: "Let Jesus be your power. Lash yourself with God's promises to the throne of His omnipotence, and your weakness will become strength." I have promised to spend much of the night with him praying that the power of God and not of man may rest upon him.

Brethren, there is no censoriousness in anything that I have said. Apply as much of it to me as you will, and then I am ready to confess other faults and weaknesses that you know not of. But is it not appalling, that revelation of the statistical secretary: There are nine hundred and eighty-nine preachers in Texas who are not pastors, nor missionaries, nor evangelists, nor teachers, nor denominational agents, nor editors?

Indeed, "we have this treasure in earthen vessels." Oh, how earthen! When I first read of the quarrel between Paul and Barnabas, I said: "Earthen vessels." And when preachers now quarrel, the bleeding church cries out: "Earthen! Earthen!" I could get down on my knees before God in your presence to make one yearning plea—that you make this Convention one of peace, power, and brotherly love. Put relentless hands down into your hearts, and tear out by the roots everything that will not advance the interests of the Redeemer's kingdom here in this meeting. Tear it out. It depends on you. Let every watchman blow his trumpet at the coming of the sword. Let every sentinel cry out on his post: "To arms! They come! The foe—the foe!" Let every leader leap to the front of his battalion and stay to the front in every good work and work, lest there be a retreat while the mournful bugles sound a recall and the dirge of defeat be the music to which we march.

I magnify my office, oh, my God, as I get nearer home. I can say more truthfully every year, "I thank God that He put me in this office"; I thank Him that He would not let me have any other, that He shut me up to this glorious work; and when I get home among the blessed on the bank of everlasting deliverance and look back toward time and all of its clouds, and sorrows, and pains, and privations, I expect to stand up and shout for joy that down there in the fog and mists, down there in the dust and in the struggle, God let me be a preacher. I magnify my office in life; I magnify it in death; I magnify it in heaven; I magnify it, whether poor or rich, whether sick or well, whether strong or weak, anywhere, everywhere, among all people, in any crowd. Lord God, I am glad that I am a preacher, that I am a preacher of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. ☺

Horatius Bonar And The Search For Rest

John Y. May

“Lord... Thou has formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee” (Augustine).¹

“Our relationship to God is then to us the first question: till this is settled, nothing else can be settled” (Horatius Bonar).²

One of the recurring subjects in the thought of Horatius Bonar (1808–1889) is that of rest. The brilliant Scottish minister, author and hymn-writer mentions it often in his various writings as well as in his hymns. I will highlight some of his observations on this theme.

Rest—The Future Dimension

As we might well expect, Bonar understood that rest had an ultimate, future dimension. This future rest is reserved for those who trust in God’s saving provision. Seen in this way, it is a promised, “remaining” rest which is part of that heavenly inheritance God has set aside for “another day” (Hebrews 4:8–9).

This future aspect of rest is also biblically portrayed as an eventual extension of that Sabbath rest symbolized in the Old Testament covenant (Exodus 31:15; Leviticus 23:3) and to be realized at a later moment (1 Peter 1:4; 2 Corinthians 5:1). In one of his hymns Horatius Bonar also referred to this as “the endless rest.”³ After a remarkable life of service to God and others, Bonar himself entered that promised rest in 1889.

For the most part, however, Bonar treats rest not from the perspective of a heaven to be gained, but as a state of condition to be urgently pursued here and now—on this earth and in this present world. The remainder of our discussion of Bonar’s views on this subject will concentrate on this present prospect of rest.

Rest—A Settled Conviction

Rest, for Bonar, is viewed as settled conviction because of its sure foundation. It stems from a reliable gospel. It is in the pages of God’s certain Word. Bonar would learn from Scripture about Christ, his Savior and only answer to his own sin problem. “In it [the Bible] God speaks... as one uttering only truth, and expecting

to be believed.⁴ God “has written the Scriptures,” Bonar declared, “and sent them to us to be believed for salvation....”⁵ It is “in this revelation of His character that the sinner is to find the rest he is seeking.”⁶ It is the belief in the message of the gospel, he notes, which “brings pardon to the guilty” (*Everlasting*, 77).

That gospel message is centered in Jesus Christ and His saving work on the cross on our behalf. “From that same cross,” Bonar asserts, “springs the sinner’s rest, the sinner’s... justification” (*Everlasting*, 23). “Acceptance and completeness in our standing before God are attributed to the cross... and death of the divine Substitute” (*Everlasting*, 24). “The very essence of Christ’s deliverance is the substitution of Himself for us, His life for ours” (*Peace*, 40). It is that reconciling action by Christ which, when trusted solely, results in our forgiveness and the removal of our guilt. “The completion of the justifying work...” Bonar explains, is such “that a sinner may at once use it for pardon, for rest, for acceptance...” (*Everlasting*, 30).

Discovering rest—in Christ—involves a release from our own efforts to gain favor with God. “For anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from his own work...” (Hebrews 4:10). Christian trust, says Bonar, entails the cessation of work and effort, accepting instead what another has done for us (*Everlasting*, 40).

Rest, then, is the result of confident trust and assured resolve. Bonar at one point describes it as “the calm reception of the truth” (*Everlasting*, 63). “The life of a believing man is a life of known pardon... a life of which the outset was the settlement of the great question between himself and God” (*Everlasting*, 78).

Rest—The End of the Quest

Rest of the kind that Horatius Bonar was seeking is such that it results especially in rest for the soul (Matthew 11:29). He asks specifically, “Is my soul at rest?” (*Everlasting*, 92). He came to see that knowledge of the gospel’s life-giving truth was “rest—rest of soul...” (*Holiness*, 26) coming from realized forgiveness. That kind of rest can only come from God Himself (Psalm 62:1).

In some respects, rest has certain similarities to peace, a peace that “must be the consequence of our having ascertained, upon sure evidence, the forgiving love of God” (*Holiness*, 32). This peace is “founded on and derived from what the cross reveals and what the cross has done” (*Everlasting*, 91). The removal of our condemnation because of Christ’s death is “the only effectual remedy for the deadly disease of an alienated heart and stubborn will” (*Everlasting*, 99). As such, any peaceful composure is the outcome of the finished work of Christ which was designed “to remove... unrest from heart and conscience...” (*Everlasting*, 93).

Bonar also introduces a related concept, that of the “resting place.” Borrowing on scriptural imagery (Psalm 132:14; Isaiah 28:12), the term refers to something that is definite and assured, namely, the abiding presence and continuing provision of our Lord. Bonar finds that “Christ for us is our one resting place” (*Holiness*, 20).

Christ's reconciling and unchanging love, Bonar claimed through song, is "the resting-place."⁷ "It is Him," he repeats, "and in His boundless love that you are to find your resting-place" (*Peace*, 83).

In one sense, the finding of this initiatory rest represents the end of the quest. The believer, Bonar recognized, "not only knows there is such a thing as forgiveness and eternal life, but he has found them...."⁸

From another perspective, however, the obtaining of rest marks the start of other new beginnings. Actually, it is only after one has found rest in Christ that he or she can truly begin the Christian life. Pardon, Bonar insisted, must precede acceptable performance (*Holiness*, 34). Consistent, right living cannot begin "until the sinner has found forgiveness and tasted liberty and has confidence towards God" (*Everlasting*, 97).

It is only after a person has been genuinely forgiven that he can engage in the spiritual warfare—with all its striving, setbacks and victories—that Bonar so skillfully described in his impressive classic, *God's Way of Holiness*. The, and only then, can a person authentically embark on a "new life, a new joy, a new work..." (*Holiness*, 10). What "incentive to work," Bonar inquires, "can be greater than an ascertained and realized forgiveness?" (*Holiness*, 26).

Here, with this kind of rest acquired, the keen mind and searching spirit of Horatius Bonar would meet with fulfillment. Here, the Edinburgh author-pastor would indeed find satisfying rest, one goal of his life's quest.

Perhaps no better closing statement of this achievement of God in the believer's life can be found than in the words of Horatius Bonar's own hymn:

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Come unto Me and rest;
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down
Thy head upon My breast."
I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary, and worn, and sad;
I found in Him a resting-place,
And He has made me glad. ☺

Notes:

¹ Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, trans. T. A. Pikington (New York, NY: Liveright, 1943), I, 1:1.

² Horatius Bonar, *The Everlasting Righteousness* (Unicoi, TN: Trinity Foundation, 1994), 88. Hereafter referred to as *Everlasting*.

³ Horatius Bonar, from the hymn "A Few More Years Shall Roll." Elsewhere, Bonar referred to this future eventuality as the "everlasting rest" encompassing a "whole eternity." See: Horatius Bonar, *The Morning of Joy* (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1871), 90, 220.

⁴ Horatius Bonar, "The Truthfulness of God," *The Christian Treasury*, vol. 20 (1864), 277.

⁵ Horatius Bonar, *God's Way of Holiness* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1930), 27. Hereafter referred to as *Holiness*.

⁶ Horatius Bonar, *God's Way of Peace* (Durham, England: Evangelical Press, 1968), 23. Hereafter referred to as *Peace*.

⁷ Horatius Bonar, from the hymn "I Hear the Words of Love."

⁸ Horatius Bonar, *When God's Children Suffer* (New Canaan, CT: Keats Publishing, 1981), 92. By contrast, the person not at rest is "drifting from place to place in quest of anchorage, but unable to find it." See Horatius Bonar, *Truth and Error* (New York, NY: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1879), 22.

⁹ Horatius Bonar, from the hymn "I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say."

Select Hymns of Horatius Bonar

Not What My Hands Have Done

Not what my hands have done can save my guilty soul;
Not what my toiling flesh has borne can make my spirit whole.
Not what I feel or do can give me peace with God;
Not all my prayers and sighs and tears can bear my awful load.

Your voice alone, O Lord, can speak to me of grace;
Your power alone, O Son of God, can all my sin erase.
No other work but Yours, no other blood will do;
No strength but that which is divine can bear me safely through.

Thy work alone, O Christ, can ease this weight of sin;
Thy blood alone, O Lamb of God, can give me peace within.
Thy love to me, O God, not mine, O Lord, to Thee,
Can rid me of this dark unrest, And set my spirit free.

I bless the Christ of God; I rest on love divine;
And with unfaltering lip and heart I call this Savior mine.
His cross dispels each doubt; I bury in His tomb
Each thought of unbelief and fear, each lingering shade of gloom.

I praise the God of grace; I trust His truth and might;
He calls me His, I call Him mine, My God, my joy and light.
'Tis He Who saveth me, and freely pardon gives;
I love because He loveth me, I live because He lives.

I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Come unto Me and rest;
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down
Thy head upon My breast."
I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary, and worn, and sad;
I found in Him a resting-place,
And He has made me glad.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Behold, I freely give
The living water; thirsty one,
Stoop down and drink, and live."
I came to Jesus, and I drank
Of that life-giving stream;
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
And now I live in Him.

I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"I am this dark world's Light;
Look unto Me, thy morn shall rise,
And all thy day be bright."
I looked to Jesus, and I found
In Him my Star, my Sun;
And in that light of life I'll walk
Till travelling days are done.

Amen.

A Few More Years Shall Roll

A few more years shall roll,
A few more seasons come,
And we shall be with those that rest
Asleep within the tomb;
Then, O my Lord, prepare
My soul for that great day.
 O wash me in Thy precious blood,
 And take my sins away.

A few more suns shall set
O'er these dark hills of time,
And we shall be where suns are not
A far serener clime:
Then, O my Lord, prepare
My soul for that blest day.
 O wash me in Thy precious blood,
 And take my sins away.

A few more storms shall beat
On this wild rocky shore,
And we shall be where tempests cease,
And surges swell no more;
Then, O my Lord, prepare
My soul for that calm day.
 O wash me in Thy precious blood,
 And take my sins away.

A few more struggles here,
A few more partings o'er,
A few more toils, a few more tears,
And we shall weep no more:
Then, O my Lord, prepare
My soul for that bright day.
 O wash me in Thy precious blood,
 And take my sins away.

A few more Sabbaths here
Shall cheer us on our way,
And we shall reach the endless rest,
Th'eternal Sabbath day;
Then, O my Lord, prepare
My soul for that sweet day.
 O wash me in Thy precious blood,
 And take my sins away.

'Tis but a little while,
And He shall come again
Who died that we might live, who lives
That we with Him may reign;
Then, O my Lord, prepare
My soul for that glad day.
 O wash me in Thy precious blood,
 And take my sins away.

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