

ALEXANDER WHYTE - HIS LIFE & SERMONS

Scottish Presbyterian Alexander Whyte (1836-1921)

by Maureen Bradley

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Alexander Whyte was born in Kirriemuir, Scotland, in a two-room thatched weaver's cottage. His mother, Janet Thomson, was unmarried at the time of his birth and did not marry his father, John Whyte. Soon after Alexander's birth his father left for America and Janet never saw him again. She struggled to support her son working long hours at the loom and in the summer helping local farmers in harvesting. Though from humble origins as far as physical substance, young Alexander was surrounded by people who held religion in high regard. There were four churches in the town representing the four main divisions within the Presbyterian Church. Sunday mornings he went with his mother to the Free Church, in the afternoon to the Relief Church with his grandmother, and in the evening he went to the Auld Licht Church by himself. Thus at an early age Alexander sought God and hoped that one day he would be a minister.

His endeavors to obtain an education were difficult, for his mother rarely had the funds needed to pay his tuition at the elementary school. He did excel in the little schooling he had but at the age of ten was forced to give up his scholastic efforts to work as a herd-boy for a year. He developed a passion for books at an early age and though unable to purchase any, he was able to borrow them.

Janet Thomson sympathized with her son's desire to be a minister but due to their meager circumstances was unable to see a way to accomplish this. So at the age of thirteen Alexander agreed to be an apprentice to James Ogilvy, a shoemaker. His determination to get an education did not cease in his apprenticeship. He subscribed to a self-educating magazine and paid a young boy to hold up books for him while he made shoes. When he was fifteen he joined three weavers in a study of arithmetic in their spare time. Also contacts with various friends helped him obtain other studies. Learning for Alexander was a part of living.

In the year 1854 when he was eighteen his apprenticeship ended and he was now old enough to become a member of the Free Church. He became a schoolmaster at Padanaram, a single room schoolhouse of nearly fifty students. This was very hard for him for he had to study every evening to keep ahead of his senior pupils. A year later he accepted a position at the Free Church School in Airlie. It was here that the minister of Airlie, David White, took a special interest in Alexander and helped him prepare for a university education by teaching him Latin and Greek. Funding for his university studies was now the problem. He decided to write to his father in America, a request he found very difficult to make. His father was a successful business man in New York and upon receiving this correspondence sent a generous financial gift. In November of 1858 Alexander Whyte's dream of a university education came true and he enrolled as a first-year student at King's College. The college library, with its seventy thousand volumes, soon became a favorite of his. He joined the Debating Society and was recognized as an excellent speaker. Most

of the extra-curricular activities associated with college life were not a part of his experience, for he found a temporary job teaching factory workers in the evenings. This brought him enough money for food, clothes, and books.

Whyte related his studies in various fields to ethical and religious questions, he never lost his sense of call to the ministry. At this time he also discovered the works of Thomas Goodwin, a Puritan divine, who was a favorite of his throughout his life. He was soon to develop a reputation for being a lover of the Puritans, for he appreciated their emphasis on a need for personal religious experience. He was invited, in 1861, to be a temporary minister for the Woodside Congregational Church, Aberdeen. The congregation wanted him to become their full-time pastor, but he refused because he did not want to give up his studies.

In April, 1862 at the age of 26 he graduated receiving honors in Mental Philosophy and Moral Philosophy. Since he wanted to be a minister in a Free Church, it was necessary for him to study at a theological college. Entering New College, Edinburgh in 1862, he commenced his theological studies with eminent professors such as William Cunningham and Robert Rainy. During his four years at New College he was able to attend and serve under two notable ministers; Dr. Candlish at Free St. George's and Dr. Moody Stuart at St. Luke's. He became the assistant to Dr. Stuart, conducting mid-week services and doing much of the pastoral visitation.

Whyte obtained his license as a Probationer in 1866 after delivering a sermon before the Presbytery. He was invited to assist Dr. John Roxburgh in the ministry of Free St. John's, Glasgow. In the three years he was at Free St. John's he supervised the Sunday Schools and Bible Classes, was ordained as a full-fledged minister and invited to work with Dr. Roxburgh on equal terms. Humility and prayerfulness were to become hallmarks of Whyte's ministry. Though known as a fearless preacher, most of those who knew him said he was shy. As is characteristic of many Scotsmen, "the doors of their hearts open only for the coming in of friends, very rarely for the letting out of confidences."

In 1870 Whyte was asked to be the junior minister of Free St. George's in Edinburgh. Dr. Candlish, the senior pastor, was growing old and needed help. This quote from the first sermon he preached at Free St. George expresses some of the hopes he had for his ministry there: "Teach you all how to read and use your Bibles wisely and with profit - to read with understanding, and to read often, the deepest parts of them. To press continually the sovereign and uncompromising place of prayer in the Christian life, and in a word to set Christ in his fullness, in his Person, and work, and rule - continually before you." (Kathy Triggs, Alexander Whyte the Peacemaker, p. 31) And this is what he did as junior minister and then as their senior pastor, upon the death of Dr. Candlish three years later. He was to be a faithful, watchful shepherd to this flock for approximately 50 years.

When he was 45 years old he married the daughter of a distinguished Scotch family, Jane E. Barbour, and seven children grew up around them (one child, George, died in infancy).

In 1909 Whyte was offered the principalship of the New College upon the death of Dr. Marcus Dods. Though at first he refused it, he later became convinced to accept the office and filled the job with memorable distinction.

After suffering a heart attack followed by several minor attacks, Whyte resigned his post and retired to Buckinghamshire. There he devoted the remainder of his life to reading and writing. He died January 6, 1921 in his sleep. Buried in Edinburgh, "his coffin was covered with a purple pall, embroidered with the words from the Book of Revelation, 'There shall be no night there.' On his gravestone was inscribed the motto, 'I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.'" (Kathy Triggs, *Alexander Whyte the Peacemaker*, p. 89) Those who had known him said he was a man who was generous in his assessment of others and rejoiced in the success of those he loved more than in his own success.

Many were the theological debates in which Whyte became involved during his years in the ministry. However, he will always be remembered for his preaching for no ruler has held his subjects more captive than Alexander Whyte did from his pulpit. From this throne he ruled the world-wide empire of the mind and the heart of his people.

He was a man of great imagination and an expert at painting word pictures in his sermons. The following example illustrates not only his ability to have his hearers visualize what he said but also his exceptional dramatic power. When preaching on the Rich Young Ruler he, "watched him and made his congregation see him wheeling blindly down the black depths of the inferno, circle after circle, until just as he disappeared on his way down its bottomless abyss, he, who had been bending over the pulpit, watching him with blazing eye, shouted: 'I hear it! It's the mocking laughter of the universe, and it's shouting at him over the edge, "Ha, ha! Kept the commandments!'" (G. F. Barbour, *The Life of Alexander Whyte D. D.*, pp. 300-301)

He took adults and children by the hand and enabled them to step into his sermons by the way he expressed his ideas. The following address to a small meeting of children at St. George's is an example of this unique talent. "Dr. Whyte read from the Gospels the story of the widow who cast her mite into the treasury, and went on to say: 'This woman was a washerwoman. She washed the dirty linen of Simon the Pharisee and other Pharisees round about Jerusalem. We shall all see this woman, children, when we get to heaven. The Lord will come in with this woman on His arm, and He'll say, "Come here, Dr. Whyte; come here Dr. Smith. Do you see this woman here? She has done more than any of you." And I shall go up to her and say, "Woman, I used to preach about you, down in Edinburgh.'" (G. F. Barbour, *The Life of Alexander Whyte D. D.*, p. 312)

Here is one more illustration of the genius of his imagination. "Many are the sacred memories in Free St. George's of sermons at Communion seasons when he preached on the Passion of our Lord. It was in a passage on the crown of thorns in one such sermon that he suddenly said with arresting emphasis, 'I wonder in what sluggard's garden they grew!'" (G. F. Barbour, *The Life of Alexander Whyte D. D.*, pp. 303-304)

His compassion for sinners who were indifferent to the gospel message could be heard at the close of many of his sermons as he would cry "What will it be like to be in heaven?" And then add, "Aye, and what will it be not to be there?" (G. F. Barbour, *The Life of Alexander Whyte D. D.*, p. 30)

Most of the books published by Whyte are simply his sermons in print. In reading these books you will be impressed with the vast extent of his reading. His knowledge of books and their authors can be shown by his continual quoting of them in his sermons. He was a lover of books and you might even say a glutton when it came to the amount of books he consumed. As an intellectual predator he would digest that which was fit to eat with one swift act of comprehension and spew out the rest. Though he read a wide array of books, he fed his intellect most on the Bible; next in line were the Puritans and the Covenanters. This can be confirmed by his series of sermons on Samuel Rutherford, Thomas Shepard, Thomas Goodwin, and the works of John Bunyan.

He was often referred to as a Puritan risen from the dead. The Puritans were known as experts in casuistry (the science of dealing with problems of right and wrong conduct by applying principles drawn from Scriptures) so was this man. Another strength of his ministry lay in his intimate knowledge of God and in his knowledge of human character. As he had his own heart warmed by Christ, so he singed others. He learned about human character from delving deep into the recesses of his own "desperately wicked" heart. Strict self-examination and self-knowledge were a major part of his own life and teaching. What he himself had experienced was a basis for what he then taught others. He related to his people the terrors and the glories at which his own heart had trembled or rejoiced. Nobody ever heard from his lips any cold truth. He was not detached from the truth he preached. His fiercest accusations were always against himself. When he was speaking in a slum where its inhabitants were known for their drinking he astonished his hearers by informing them that he had found out the name of the wickedest man in Edinburgh, and he had come to tell them; and bending forward he whispered: "His name is Alexander Whyte." (G. F. Barbour, *The Life of Alexander Whyte D. D.*, p. 316)

He had no use for abstractions of any kind, he spoke no polite generalities. He believed in the Latin phrase, "*Generalia non pungunt*" - "Generalities do not pierce the deep"

(Barbour, p. 305). How could toothless and timid generalities arouse sorrow for sin or love for Christ? He would break his theme down into particulars point by vivid point. His sermons were reasoned out and made clear, cutting to the bone of sheer reality. While other pulpits of the day disturbed no one's conscience and feelings were never hurt, at Free St. George Church, pulpit and pew were not content to sleep together in dull apathy holding to a form of godliness though denying its power (II Tim. 3:5). Truth was carried home to each person's conscience by the depth and preciseness of each sermon.

Alexander Whyte held in high regard the greatness of the pulpit. His advise to those preparing for

the ministry was to neglect any part of their work rather than the preparation for their sermons.

One of his congregation once said, "every sermon in Free St. George was a volcano and every opening prayer a revelation." (G. F. Barbour, *The Life of Alexander Whyte D. D.*, p. 309)

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"Look to Your Motives" by Alexander Whyte

Introduction:

"The great schoolmen had a saying to the effect that all created things take their true goodness or their true evil from the end they aim at." (Whyte, *First Series Bunyan Characters*, p. 216) As we observe the world in which we live and the various things which men aim at (i.e. the love of money, honor and satisfying fleshly appetites) we often shake our heads in scorn at such low and selfish motives. However, if we (Christians) were to honestly examine our own hearts, could we agree with this assessment of Richard Hooker? "Even in the good things that we do, how many defects are there intermingled! For God in that which is done respecteth especially the mind and intention of the doer. Cut off, then, all those things wherein we have regarded our own glory, those things which we do to please men, or to satisfy our own liking, those things which we do with any by-respect, and not sincerely and purely for the love of God, and a small score will serve for the number of our righteous deeds." (Whyte, *First Series Bunyan Characters*, p. 217) In this sermon Alexander Whyte will show us that an acquaintance with our own hearts and motives is the beginning to a correct pilgrimage (sanctification) toward the Celestial City. He will have us witness against ourselves, judge, and execute our incorrect motives. For if we do not go as deep as God's eye goes in searching our hearts, we do but harm and deceive ourselves. After showing us where we will never find true joy and satisfaction, we will realize that only in Christ is our true rest found. May God enable us to step into the higher motive of seeking Christ for the sake of His own worth and loveliness as well as for the benefits we receive from Him.

Look to Your Motives by Alexander Whyte [With Mercy and With Judgment, pp. 44-56]

"If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness." (Matt. 6:22,23)

Look to your motives! - our Lord says to us over and over again in this chapter. Our Lord's words always go to the bottom of things. They always go to the bottom of our hearts. Our Lord's words are always 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: they are discerners also of the thoughts and intents of our hearts. Our Lord's words strip our hearts bare of all affectation and pretence, display and insincerity, ostentation and hypocrisy. "Thy word, O Lord, is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it." "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts. And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Our motives are the secret springs of our hearts. Our motives are those hidden things in our hearts that move us to speak and to act. Our lives all issue out from our hearts, like so many streams out of so many deep and hidden springs: and thus it is that we are so often told in the Word of God to "keep our hearts with all diligence." And thus it is that our Lord's teaching is so full of all the matters of the heart; and especially of the hidden motives of the heart. Take good heed of your motives, He says three times to us in this single passage. Be simple in your hearts, He says to us. Be sincere in your hearts. Be pure in your hearts. Be not men-pleasers. Be not eye-servants. Be not "hypocrites." Seek not to be seen of men. Seek secret places. Seek obscurity. Seek and keep silence. Do nothing for the praise, or for the approval, or for the

rewards of men. Let not your left hand know what your right hand doeth. Live all your life in the presence of God. Lay open your heart to His eye alone. Seek to have praise of God. Work for His approval and for His reward, Who seeth in secret. "The light of the body is the eye: if, therefore, thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness."

1. Now, men alone, of all God's creatures on the earth, have motives. The sun, and the moon, and the stars all move. They all move with the motion which their Maker gave to them at the beginning, and which He continually conveys to them by His upholding and impelling hand. "In them hath He set a tabernacle for the sun: which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof." The fowl of the air also, the fish of the sea, all sheep and oxen also - they all creep, and walk, and run, and fly, each one of them after his kind - but it is never said of any of them that they have a motive in what they do, or in where they go. They eat and they drink: they lie down and they rise up: but they never say- "When I awake I am still with Thee!" The ox knoweth his owner, indeed: and the ass his master's crib; but all the same, they cannot enter into their master's mind with them. They do what by bit and bridle he compels them to do; but, with it all, they do not consider. They have no understanding. They have no power of contrary choice. They were not made in their Maker's image. Their chief end is never said to be to glorify God, and to enjoy Him for ever. They have all their appointed ends, and they all stand in the same ordinances in which they were placed at their creation; but they do not know their own ordinances, nor who ordained them. To man alone God saw it good to give understanding, - understanding, and conscience, and will, and a contrary choice. Alone, of all things that live, and move, and have their being in God, man is moved by his own motives.

2. And thus it is that God goes down to our motives when He would know us altogether, and would discover us, and would conclusively judge us. We ourselves make every effort to get at men's motives when we would know them, and would judge them. But we cannot wade with any security into that deep sea. Men's motives lie deep down beyond our discovery and jurisdiction. God's eye alone can see and search out a motive. We all feel that we are not truly known till our motives are known. We all feel that we are not yet fully and finally judged till our motives are laid naked and open. I may do what seems to your judgment right or wrong, praiseworthy or blameworthy - but hold your peace about me till you are quite sure that you have all my motives laid out under your eye. When you praise me, you pain me and humiliate me, if my motive was not a pure motive: and when you blame me, I appeal from your judgment to His before whose tribunal all my motives lie bare:

"For I am ware it is the seed of act God holds appraising in His hollow palm: Not act grown great thence as the world believes, Leafage and branchage vulgar eyes admire."

What I am in my motives, that I really am: that, just that, and neither more nor less. And it is the prerogative and glory of God to hold all my motives, "appraising them" in His righteous hand. "Talk no more so exceeding proudly," Hannah prayed and said, "and let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed." "God weigheth more," says Thomas, "with how much love a man worketh: He weigheth the motive more than the actual work. He doeth much in God's judgment who loveth much." And we all have by heart Paul's fine passage on motive under the name of Charity in the thirteenth chapter of

First Corinthians.

3. Now from all this, it follows as clear as day that our true sanctification, our true holiness of heart, our true and full and final salvation, all lie in the rectification, the simplification, and the purification of our motives. The corruption and pollution of our hearts - trace all that down to the bottom, and it all lies in our motives: in the selfishness, the unneighborliness, the unbrotherliness, the ungodliness of our motives. We are all our own motive in all that we do: we are all our own main object and our own chief end. And it is just this that stains and debases so much that we do. It is just this that so pollutes our hearts in the sight of God: and it is this that makes all we do so polluted in our own eyes, when we look at ourselves with the eyes of God. It is this that makes so much of our very righteousness to be filthy rags; and it is this inward bondage to bad motives that makes all God's saints to cry out with Paul under their utter wretchedness. Our Lord's blessedness, amid all His labors and burdens and sorrows, arose out of this that His motives in all that He did were good. His eye was single, and therefore His whole body full of light. He pleased not Himself. He pursued not His own ends. He had all His motives outside of Himself, and above Himself, He was always, even in His early youth, "about His Father's business." He worked for praise, and for approval, and for reward indeed - but it was never the praise or the approval or the reward of men, but always of His Father. And thus it was that He had a clean heart, and clean hands, and a clean and a peaceful conscience in all that He did; and, after His work was finished - because of the simplicity, and the purity of His motives in all parts of His work - He had such a reception awarded Him in His Father's house as no other son or servant of God has ever had. Now, where our Lord was pure and perfect, we are still impure and imperfect. Where His eye was single, our eye is double; and where His body was full of light, our body, at its best, is but twilight and darkness. There are all degrees of purity and of impurity in our motives. But it is he whose motives are purest, and whose eye is singlest, who is most prostrated and humiliated and overwhelmed with the impure, selfish, ungodly mixtures of his own motives. In all he does, when he does his very best, in almsgiving, in fasting, in praying, in preaching, and indeed in all his actions and words and thoughts - so deeply is it all infected with the deadly taint of himself that his motives are a constant source of self-despising, self-hatred, and self-despair. And just as his Master will never be pleased with His disciple till all His disciple's motives are as pure as His own, so neither can the disciple of Christ ever be pleased with himself till he is pure as his Master is pure.

"Saints purest in God's eyes Are vilest in their own."

4. "The one thing needful," then, in all that we think and say and do is a good motive. The new birth that we must all every day undergo, the one all-embracing change of heart that God demands of us and offers us in His Son every day, is a completely new motive. The fall of man took place when God ceased to be man's motive and man's end, and when each man became his own motive and his own end. And the supreme need of all men is just the restoration to their hearts of God as their true motive and their chief end. Every human heart cries with Augustine - every human heart in its own language: "Thou hast made me for Thyself, and I know no rest till I find my rest in Thee. Thou hast made us to be moved by one motive, and to be directed by one intention, and to rest, with a perfect rest, in one end: and both our motive, and our intention, and our rest are in Thee." "Capable we are of God," says Hooker in one of his magnificent passages - "capable we are of God both by understanding and by will: by understanding, as He is that

sovereign Truth, which comprehendeth the rich treasure-house of all wisdom: by will, as He is that God of goodness, whereof whoso tasteth shall thirst no more... Under man, no creature in the world is capable of felicity and bliss. First, because their chiefest perfection consisteth in that which is best for them, but not in that which is simply best, as ours doth. Secondly, because whatsoever external perfection they tend unto, it is not better than themselves, as ours is. How just occasion have we therefore, with the prophet, to admire the goodness of God! 'Lord, what is man, that Thou shouldest exalt him above the work of Thy hands' - so far as to make Thyself the inheritance of his rest and the substance of his felicity." "Whom have I," exclaims Asaph the psalmist- "whom have I in heaven but Thee! And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever."

5. Now, all serious-minded and self-observant men will surely say to all this that they know all this already and have long known it: they accept all this, and delight to hear it; but the longer they live, the more they fail to attain to it. They see purity of motive, and simplicity of end, and directness of intention, and godliness of life - all shining like the sun and the moon and the stars high up above them, so high above them that they despair of ever rising up to them. My brethren, be patient: be instructed. The new heart of a saint of God was never yet attained at a bound. A new life of motive, and of disposition, and of intention, and of aim and end is not the growth of a day or of a year. All this present life is allotted by God to His saints to make them a new heart. This inward work will fill up your whole life to its last moment, - God, till that moment, working in you to will and to do, to rectify your motives and to protect and purify your ends to the last. Believe that, and the great work of your life is already half wrought. Believe what God's purpose with your life is. Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief! Believe nobly. Believe magnificently. Believe with Christ the greatest Believer, and the chiefest Saint. Believe that all your life is laid out, and filled up - not and never for any earthly and temporal end, but always for a heavenly and an everlasting end! Not to give you rest, and pleasure, and satisfaction, where those ends are not; but to give you, and to prepare you for, these ends where they alone are, where they are worthy of you, and where you will be both capable and worthy of them. Threescore years and ten, with all their deep providences, ordinations from everlasting, searching exercises and subduing and weaning experiences of heart, means of grace, and foretastes of glory - are all not for one moment too much for the perfect sanctification and everlasting and secure salvation of an immortal soul. Ask yourselves then, amid all those things divine and human, earthly and heavenly, outward and inward - ask yourselves if the one work of your life, the one undertaking and achievement of your life, is making progress. And you have a sure test of your progress just in this question: "What is my motive in this that I now do? And in this that I now suffer? In the light of God, and under His eye, why do I do this and that? What is my motive? What is my intention? What is the end I have set before myself in this and in that?" And then we shall no longer be as the horse and the mule that have no understanding. We shall say in every enterprise, What would my Master have me here to do? And we shall answer ourselves: "O Lord, I am Thy servant: I am thy servant, and the son of Thine handmaid. Thou hast loosed my bonds!" At the same time, it is by no means necessary to torture ourselves and to be in continual bondage to the letter of the law. We do not stop at every step of a journey and ask ourselves what place we are going to, and why we are going to that place. We weigh our motives well

before we start, and if they are right we set out; and if they are not right, we turn back. But once having made up our mind and started, we go on, enjoying the way, conversing about many things by the way, refreshing and resting ourselves by the way, and setting out again on our journey. And let the love of our heart be once rightly placed; let our treasure once be in heaven; let our motive once be God and our neighbors and not ourselves; and with many halts, and many hungerings and thirstings, with many stumblings and falls even, yet our faces are still steadfastly set to the end of our journey, and the path of the just will lead us at last to our journey's end. Walking under the finger-post of the golden rule, walking in the light of a single eye and a right intention, we shall more and more walk at liberty, till all we think, and all we do, is pleasing in God's eyes.

(1) Now from all this there follow two or three plain lessons. And this very plain lesson to begin with, - that we cannot, by any possibility, know, so as to judge, our neighbors' motives. God has not given us the ability. He has reserved that divine ability to Himself. And at his peril, therefore, let a man intermeddle with another man's motives. Every human being holds secrets in his heart that the day of judgment shall for the first time publish abroad. Every human being holds in himself a whole world of mystery to all his fellows; and most of all to those who know him best. Attempt to judge no man's motives, then, for you cannot do it. You are a wise man, and a true man, and a good man if you can judge your own, and yourself on account of them. Judge yourself, then, and you shall not be judged; but judge other men, and with what measure you mete it shall be meted out to you again. Leave all judgment of other men's motives therefore to the Judge of all the earth, - to Him Who will judge you and all men by the thoughts and the intents of the heart.

(2) Again, it is surely a great comfort to a good man to know that a good motive makes the smallest act both great and good in God's heart-searching sight. Splendid deeds that are blazoned abroad by a thousand trumpets are but "splendid sins" in God's judgment, unless they are done out of a secret motive of true and genuine goodness. Unless love to God and to man, unless self-forgetfulness and self-conquest, lay at its root, the most far-sounding deed that ever any man did was but dust and ashes, and far less than that in the sight of God. Whereas, - one single cup of cold water, one visit, in passing the door, to a sick-bed, a salutation on the street, a shaft of love and honor and goodwill shot in secret over the city or over the sea, for love's sake, and for Christ's sake: "Come, ye blessed of my Father: inherit the Kingdom prepared for you!"

(3) And to come back to this chapter for our last lesson: - Three times it is told us, - and it must therefore be a lesson of the last importance to us to learn, - three times over our Lord says of the Pharisee: Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward. And the third time - Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward. And then, over against that, our Lord says to His disciples, and through them to us: "Give all your alms in secret: fast and pray in secret: seek out secret places: and hide yourselves, and all that you do, with your Father in secret, and your Father which seeth in secret will reward you openly. And, blessed are ye, when men, not knowing your good motives, shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake." As much as to say: Go down, if need be to your grave, unknown and undiscovered, hated, despised, misjudged, misrepresented, misunderstood: only, keep your heart hidden with Christ in God: and when Christ, who is your life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory!

"The Flatterer"

(Whyte, Alexander. Bunyan Characters Second Series Lectures Delivered in St. George's Free Church Edinburgh; Oliphant Anderson and Ferrier, Edinburgh; London: 1894, pp. 24-33)

Introduction:

Both Ignorance and Little-Faith would have had their revenge and satisfaction upon Christian and Hopeful had they seen those two so Pharisaical old men taken in the Flatterer's net. For it was nothing else but the swaggering pride of Hopeful over the pitiful case of Little-Faith, taken along with the hard and hasty ways of Christian with that unhappy youth Ignorance, that so soon laid them both down under the small cords of the Shining One. This word of the wise man, that pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall, was fulfilled to the very letter in Christian and Hopeful that high-minded day. At the same time, it must be admitted that Christian and Hopeful would have been more than human if they had not both felt and let fall some superiority, some scorn, and some impatience in the presence of such a silly and upsetting stripling as Ignorance was; as, also, over the story of such a poor-spirited and spunging creature as Little-Faith was. Christian and Hopeful had just come down from their delightful time among the Delectable Mountains, and they were as full as they could hold of all kinds of knowledge, and faith, and hope, and assurance; when, most unfortunately, as it turned out, they first came across Ignorance, and then, after quarreling with him, they fell out between themselves over the case of Little-Faith. Their superior knowledge of the truth, and their superior strength of faith, ought to have made them more able to bear with the infirmities of the weak, and with the passing moods, however provoking, of one another. But no. And their impatience and contempt and bad temper all came at this crisis to such a head with them that they could only be cured by the small cords and the stinging words of the Shining One. The true key to this so painful part of the parable hangs at our own girdle. We who have been born and brought up in an evangelical church are thrown from time to time into the company of men -- ministers and people -- who have not had our advantages and opportunities. They have been born, baptized, and brought up in communities and churches the clean opposite of ours; and they are as ignorant of all New Testament religion as Ignorance himself was; or, on the other hand, they are as full of superstition and terror and spiritual starvation as Little-Faith was. And then, instead of recollecting and laying to heart Who made us to differ from such ignorance and such unbelief, and thus putting on love and humility and patience toward our neighbors, we speak scornfully and roughly to them, and boast ourselves over them, and as good as say to them, Stand by thyself, come not near to me, for I am wiser, wider-minded, stronger, and better every way than you. And then, ere ever we are aware of what we are doing, we have let the arch-flatterer of religious superiority and of spiritual pride seduce us aside out of the lowly and heavenly way of love and humility till we are again brought back to it with rebukes of conscience and with other chastisements. You all understand, my brethren, that the man black of flesh but covered with a white robe was no wayside seducer who met Christian and Hopeful at that dangerous part of the road only, and only on that high-minded day. You know from yourselves surely that both Christian and Hopeful carried that black but smooth-spoken man within themselves. The Flatterer who led the two pilgrims so fatally wrong that day was just their own heart taken out of their own bosom and personified and dramatized by Bunyan's dramatic genius, and so made to walk and talk and flatter and puff up

outside of themselves till they came again to see who in reality he was and whence he came, -- that is to say, till they were brought to see what they themselves still were, and would always be, when they were left to themselves. "Where did you lie last night?" asked the Shining One with the whip. With the Shepherds on the Delectable Mountains, they answered. He asked them then if they had not of those shepherds a note of direction for the way? They answered, Yes. But did you not, said he, when you were at a stand pluck out and read your note? They answered, No. He asked them why? They said they forgot. He asked, moreover if the shepherds did not bid them beware of the Flatterer? They answered, Yes; but we did not imagine, said they, that this fine-spoken man had been he."

All good literature, both sacred and profane, both ancient and modern, is full of the Flatterer. Let me not, protests Elihu in his powerful speech in the book of Job, let me not accept any man's person; neither let me give flattering titles unto man, lest in so doing my Maker should soon take me away. And the Psalmist in his powerful description of the wicked men of his day: There is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulcher; they flatter with their tongue. And again: They speak with flattering lips, and with a double heart do they speak. But the Lord shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things. "The perpetual hyperbole" of pure love becomes in the lips of impure love the impure bait that leads the simple ones astray on the streets of the city as seen and heard by the wise man out of his casement. My son, say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister, and call understanding thy kinswoman; that they may keep from the strange woman, from the stranger which flattereth thee with her words, which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God. And then in the same book of Hebrew aphorisms we find this text which Bunyan puts on the margin of the page: "A man that flattereth his neighbor spreadeth a net for his feet." And now, before we leave the ancient world, if you would not think it beneath the dignity of the place we are in, I would like to read to you a passage out of a round-about paper written by a satirist of Greece about the time of Ezra and Nehemiah in Jerusalem. You will easily remark the difference of tone between the seriousness and pathos of the Hebrew prophet and the light and chaffing touch of Theophrastus, "The Flatterer is a person," says that satirist of Greek society, "who will say to you as he walks with you, "Do you observe how people are looking at you? This happens to no man in Athens but to you. A fine compliment was paid you yesterday in the Porch. More than thirty persons were sitting there when the question was started, Who is our foremost man? Every one mentioned you first, and ended by coming back to your name." The Flatterer will laugh also at your stalest joke, and will stuff his cloak into his mouth as if he could not repress his amusement when you again tell it. He will buy apples and pears and will give to your children when you are by, and will kiss them all and will say, "Chicks of a good father." Also, when he assists at the purchase of slippers he will declare that the foot is more shapely than the shoe. He is the first of the guests to praise the wine and to say as he reclines next the host, "How delicate your fare always is"; and taking up something from the table, "Now, how excellent that is!" And so on. Yes, we have heard it all over and over again in Modern Athens also. The Greek fable also of the fox and the crow and the piece of cheese is only another illustration of the truth that the God of truth and integrity never left Himself without a witness. Our own literature also is scattered full of the Flatterer and his too willing dupes. "Of praise a mere glutton," says Goldsmith of David Garrick, "he swallowed what came. The puff of a dunce

he mistook it for fame." "Delicious essence," exclaims Sterne, "how refreshing thou art to poor human nature! How sweetly dost thou mix with the blood, and help it through the most difficult and tortuous passages to the heart." "He that slanders me," says Cowper, "paints me blacker than I am, and he that flatters me whiter. They both daub me, and when I look in the glass of conscience, I see myself disguised by both." And then he sings:

"The worth of these three kingdoms I defy
To lure me to the baseness of a lie;
And of all lies (be that one poet's boast),
The lie that flatters I abhor the most."

Now, praise, which is one of the best and sweetest things in human life, so soon passes over into flattery, which is one of the worst things, that something must here be said and laid to heart about praise also. But, to begin with, praise itself must first be praised. There is nothing nobler than true praise in him who speaks it, and there is nothing dearer and sweeter to him who hears it. God Himself inhabits the praises of Israel. All God's works praise Him. Who so offereth praise glorifieth Me. Praise waiteth for Thee, O God, in Zion. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise. And such also is all true praise between man and man. How deliciously sweet is praise! How we labor after it! How we look for it and wait for it! And how we languish and die if we do not get it! Again, when it comes to us, how it cheers us up and makes our face to shine! For a long time after it our step is so swift on the street and our face beams so that all men can quite well see what has come to us. Praise is like wine in our blood; it is new life to our fainting heart. So much is this the case that a salutation of praise is to be our first taste of heaven itself. It will wipe all tears off our eyes when we hear our Lord saying to us, "Well done!" when all our good works that we have done in the body shall be found unto praise and honor and glory in the great day of Jesus Christ.

At the same time, this same love of praise is one of our most besetting and fatal temptations as long as we are in this false and double and deceptive world. Sin, God curse it! has corrupted and poisoned everything, the very best things of this life, and when the best things are corrupted and poisoned they become the worst things. And praise does not escape this universal and fatal law. Weak, evil, and self-seeking men are near us, and we lean upon them, look to them, and listen to them. We make them our strength and support, and seek repose and refreshment from them. They cannot be all or any of these things to us; but we are far on in life, we are done with life, before we have discovered that and will admit that. Most men never discover and admit that till they are out of this life altogether. Christ's praise and the applause of His saints and angels are so future and so far away from us, and man's praise and the applause of this world, hollow and false as it is, is so near us, that we feed our souls on offal and garbage, when, already, in the witness of a good conscience, we might be feasting our souls on the finest of the wheat, and satisfying them with honey out of the rock. And, then, this insatiable appetite of our hearts, being so degraded and perverted, like all degraded and perverted appetites, becomes an iron-fast slave to what it feeds upon. What miserable slaves we all are to the approval and the praise of men! How they hold us in their bondage! How we lick their hands and sit up on our haunches and go through our

postures for a crumb! How we crawl on our belly and lick their feet for a stroke and a smile! What a hound's life does that man lead who lives upon the approval and the praise and the patronage of men! What meanness fills his mind; what baseness fills his heart! What a shameful leash he is led about the world in! How kicked about and spat upon he is; while not half so much as he knows all the time that he deserves to be! Better far be a dog at once and bay the moon than be a man and fawn upon the praises of men.

If you would be a man at all, not to speak of a Christian men, starve this appetite till you have quite extirpated it. You will never be safe from it as long as it stirs within you. Extirpate it! Extirpate it! You will never know true self-respect and you will never deserve to know it, till you have wholly extirpated your appetite for praise. Put your foot upon it, put it out of your heart. Stop fishing for it, and when you see it coming, turn away and stop your ears against it. And should it still insinuate itself, at any rate do not repeat to others what has already so flattered and humbled and weakened you. Telling it to others will only humble and weaken you more. By repeating the praise that you have heard or read about yourself you only expose yourself and purchase well-deserved contempt for yourself. And, more than that, by fishing for praise you lay yourself open to all sorts of flatterers. Honest men, men who truly respect and admire you, will show you their dignified regard and appreciation of you and your work by their silence; while your leaky slaves will crowd around you with floods of praise that they know well will please and purchase you. And when you cannot with all your arts squeeze a drop out of those who love and honor you, gallons will be poured upon you by those who have respect neither for themselves nor for you. Faugh! Flee from flatterers, and take up only with sternly true and faithful men. "I am much less regardful," says Richard Baxter, "of the approbation of men, and set much lighter store by their praise and their blame, than I once did. All worldly things appear most vain and unsatisfying to those who have tried them most. But while I feel that this has had some hand in my distaste for men's praise, yet it is the increasing impression on my heart of man's nothingness and God's transcendent greatness; it is the brevity and vanity of all earthly things, taken along with the nearness of eternity; -- it is all this that has at last lifted me above the blame and the praise of men."

To conclude; let us make up our mind and determine to pass on to God on the spot every syllable of praise that ever comes to our eyes or our ears -- if, in this cold, selfish, envious, and grudging world, any syllable of praise ever should come to us. Even if pure and generous and well-deserved praise should at any time come to us, all that does not make it ours. The best earned usury is not the stewards' own money to do with it what he likes. The principal and the interest, and the trader too, are all his master's. And, more than that, after the wisest and the best trader has done his best, he will remain, to himself at least, a most unprofitable servant. Pass on then immediately, dutifully, and to its very last syllable, to God all the praise that comes to you. Wash your hands of it and say, Not unto us, O God, not unto us, but unto Thy name. And then, to take the most selfish and hungry-hearted view of this whole matter, what you thus pass on to God as not your own but His, He will soon, and in a better and safer world, return again to the full with usury to you, and you again to God, and He again to you, and so on, all down the pure and true and sweet and blessed life of heaven.

"It Is Sometimes So With Me That I Will Rather Die Than Pray"

by Alexander Whyte

Introduction:

The last sermon by Alexander Whyte to be read is from a series of sermons he preached on the great Puritan Thomas Shepard. The titles for his sermons were taken from quotes in Shepard's writings (either his journal, sermons, or treatises). The three volume works of Thomas Shepard have been republished by Soli Deo Gloria. Shepard is well worth the considerable effort it takes to read him.

To Dr. Whyte the heart of the spiritual life was prayer. Prayer was the saint pouring his heart out upon God and God likewise pouring His heart out upon His child in intimate communion.

"He never failed to distinguish the God-ward from the man-ward aspect of religion. No spiritual teacher of his time and land preached with the same insight on penitence or on prayer. Much as he valued the privilege of public worship-yet to him the typical and the highest form of devotion was secret prayer." (G. F. Barbour, *The Life of Alexander Whyte D. D.*, p. 307)

For further precepts on prayer by Alexander Whyte his series of sermons on this subject has been published in the book *Lord, Teach Us to Pray*.

It Is Sometimes So With Me That I Will Rather Die Than Pray

by Alexander Whyte

(Concerning Thomas Shepard, Pilgrim Father and Founder of Harvard;
His Spiritual Experience and Experimental Preaching, pp. 53-64)

Suppose for a moment that we had been left without hope in our fallen estate of sin and misery. Just suppose that we had been left as a race with nothing before us but a fearful looking for of judgment. And then suppose we were told that there was another race of sinful and miserable men exactly like ourselves in one of those wonderful worlds that we see in our midnight sky. And suppose we were told also that to them in their fallen state their Maker had Himself become their Redeemer and had prepared His throne in the heavens, so that by simply approaching that throne they could command His ear and His heart and His hand at any hour of the day and in any watch of the night. Suppose all that had been told us about those happy creatures, with what holy wonder and with what holy desire would we have gone out of our house at night and looked up at that far-off star! How would we have envied those highly favored sons of God! O that my lot had been cast among them, and not on this God-forsaken earth! What Sabbath days they must have up there! What communion seasons! What meetings for prayer and praise! And what family worship! How happy it must be to be a father up there! How sweet and blessed, above all words, to be a mother! But suppose we were also assured that with all that, those so privileged people simply despised and neglected their Maker and Redeemer and absolutely hated so much as to kneel down before Him. Suppose we were assured that ninety-nine out of every hundred of those redeemed men actually rose every morning and lay down every night as if there were no God and no mercy-seat -- what would you have said about such men? You would have said that

they must be madmen, if the tenth part of what you have been told about them is true.

Now, not only is it all true, but more than that, this world of ours is that wonderful star. And we who are assembled in this House of God this Sabbath evening, we are those suicides. It is we who say, What is the Almighty that we should serve Him? And what profit should we have if we prayed to Him? Now, if all that is so, can any explanation be given of that so fearful state of matters? -- a state of matters so fearful that one of the most prayerful men that ever lived here confesses to us that it is sometimes so with him that he will rather face death and judgment than abide for long before God in secret prayer. Now can that awful state of matters be at all explained? And if so what can that explanation by any possibility be?

Well, at bottom and to begin with, there is some absolutely unaccountable alienation of our sinful hearts away from our Maker and our Redeemer. There is some utterly inexplicable estrangement from God that has, somehow, taken possession of your heart and mine. There is some dark mystery of iniquity here that has never yet been sufficiently cleared up. There is some awful 'enmity against God,' as the Holy Ghost has it: some awful malice that sometimes makes us hate the very thought of God. We hate God, indeed, much more than we love ourselves. For we knowingly endanger our immortal souls; every day and every night we risk death and hell itself rather than come close to God and abide in secret prayer. This is the spiritual suicide that we could not have believed possible had we not discovered it in our own atheistical hearts. The thing is far too fearful to put into words. But put into words for once, this is what our everyday actions say concerning us in this supreme matter of prayer. 'No; not tonight,' we say, 'I do not need to pray tonight. I am really very well tonight. And besides I have business on my hands that will take up all my time tonight. I have quite a pile of unanswered letters on my table tonight. And before I sleep I have the novel of the season to finish, for I must send it back tomorrow morning. And besides there is no such hurry as all that. I am not so old nor so frail as all that. Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season I will call for thee.'

But even when it is not so bad with us as that, at our very best there is a certain backwardness in prayer to which all praying men have to confess. I find that same sad confession in men so different both in their doctrines and in their experiences as Jeremy Taylor and John Newton. These are the very words of the eloquent Bishop in his Holy Living: 'There is no worse sign of our spiritual danger than the backwardness we have to pray. So weary are we of the duty, so glad are we to have it over, and so witty are we to find an excuse to evade it.' And these are the exact words of John Newton in his fine book, *The Cardiphonia*: 'I find in my own case an unaccountable backwardness to pray. I can read, I can write, I can converse with a ready will, but secret prayer is far more spiritual than any of these. And the more spiritual any duty is the more my carnal heart is apt to start away from it.' Both of those prayerful men, you see, confess to a sad backwardness in prayer -- to call that state of mind and heart by no worse name.

Now in a state of matters like that it is quite evident how next to impossible it will be for any man to put his whole heart into his prayer, even when he compels himself to pray. And yet without the whole heart it is not true prayer at all. It is only when we seek God with our whole

heart, that we have any assurance from Him that we shall find Him. The men of Judah, we read, swore to God with their whole heart. They sought God with their whole heart's desire and He was found of them and He gave them rest round about. And a psalmist sings of the great blessedness of them that keep God's testimonies, and that seek Him with their whole heart. And again, With my whole heart have I sought Thee, O let me not wander from Thy commandments. And again, When you seek Me with your whole heart, then shall you find Me. Even the old Stoics, who lived in an outside dispensation, said that nothing cost them so much as the things which they purchased by prayer. Because they had to give up their whole heart to their prayer before they could gain anything from God in that way. And our own New England [Thomas] Shepard has this same experience in the New Testament dispensation. 'August 13. I saw that my heart was prone to neglect prayer. I soon thought that I had prayed enough for one night. Till I came to see that all I could pray was little enough to help down all the mercy I needed. And till I came to see also that God would have me to get my mercy from Him at some cost to myself.' Yes; this is one of the great difficulties of a life of prayer to such men as we are, that it demands from us our whole heart.

Then again, sometimes, and to some people, there is the great difficulty they have in praying along with some other people. For instance, you will have an insurmountable difficulty sometimes in entering with your whole heart into public worship. Your minister does not carry you with him in his pulpit devotions. His language, his voice, his accent, his intonation, his manner, his composition, or some other unacceptableness of his to you, throws you wholly out of step with him till you lose all the help of public prayer. Then again, those who conduct family prayers at home do not help you, rather otherwise. They are so familiar to you, they so little interest you, they are so lengthy, and they so weary you, and so on. Till family worship is no worship at all to you, but the very opposite, and till you escape away from it as often as you can. Then again, and still more distressful, when a husband and his wife attempt to pray together, or a father and his son, or a mother and her daughter, their personal needs at the moment, their personal experiences at the moment are so unlike, their innermost lives are so different and so unshared, that it is impossible for them to agree together in what they ask and in the way they ask for it. Till all their attempts at united prayer only bring out the more painfully how far away they are from one another, and thus from God. So many, so real, and sometimes so absolutely unavoidable are the difficulties that lie in the way of a life of true and prevailing prayer.

And once more, why do the most devout of men and the most long-exercised of men sometimes so fall away from their life of prayer and from all liberty and comfort and power in prayer, and that after they have for years so enjoyed all that? Well, that is a question in personal and experimental religion that I cannot answer satisfactorily to myself, as yet. I have tried hard to find out some of the reasons for that declension, both in myself and in other men, but I am not satisfied with what I have found, as yet. If I succeed in my study of that painful matter, I shall tell you more about it another time.

From all that let us proceed to ask how that awful state of matters is to be met and overcome by us. For it would be too terrible to think that our dislike of prayer and our neglect of God is to go

on till death and till we are suddenly summoned to give an account of our life of prayer, as of all else.

1. Well, for one thing -- 'I thought on my ways,' says the devout and much experienced psalmist, 'and I turned my feet into Thy testimonies.' Let us be like him in this matter of prayer. Let us think on our ways in prayer. Let us think on the place that prayer holds in Holy Scripture, and on the place that prayer has always held in the lives of all God's outstanding people. Let us think of the urgency and the grace of God's commands laid on us to live a life of prayer. Let us think that the Almighty is actually waiting for us to begin to pray in order that He may begin to be gracious to us in answer to our prayers. Let us think how we must look in His eyes in this matter of prayer. Let us think what He must think and say to Himself about us. Let us think if we were in His place what we would think of any one who treated us and our son as we treat Him and His Son. We could not fail to cry to God for the spirit of grace and of supplication if we would only begin to think Who and What He is, and who and what we are, and what prayer is appointed by Him to be between Him and us.

2. And then, when once you begin to think and to pray, be sure you persevere in it to the end. Never never in this world give up prayer. And the more distaste and difficulty you find in beginning to pray the more liberty and sweetness you will taste if you only persevere. 'Men plead difficulty,' says Shepard, 'I plead advantage. For he that overcometh his indisposition to pray shall eat of the hidden manna. Have you not yourselves,' he asks, 'eaten of this same hidden manna. Have there not been times when you were very unwilling to begin to pray, but after you began and persevered but a little you could not leave off?' Yes; that is the recorded experience of one who sometimes would rather risk dying in his sin than begin to pray. What Pascal said of composition is still more true of prayer, the difficulty is to make a good beginning.

3. Then again, go on in your prayer in spite of your want of present gusto, so Santa Teresa is continually counseling her spiritual children. Samuel Rutherford shall explain to us what the Spanish saint means by gusto in prayer. When the devout parishioners of Kilmacolm complained to Rutherford concerning their too little sweetness in prayer this was the counsel he returned to his correspondents. 'The less sweetness in prayer the more pure spirituality. A sweet service has not seldom its sweetness and gusto from some other source than the spiritual world? I believe,' wrote Rutherford, 'that many think that prayer is formal and lifeless unless the wind is in the west, and unless all their sails are filled with spiritual joy. But I am not of their mind who so think,' said that great counselor of Scottish souls in their distresses and in their apprehensions.

4. 'July 2,' writes Shepard, 'I saw it to be my duty not only to pray from time to time, but actually to live by prayer. To live by prayer for myself, and for my family, and for my church. And I saw that my heart was at last conformed to the mind and the will of God in that respect. And I went on to consider in what ways I might henceforth live by prayer alone.' 'Pray often,' says Taylor, 'and you will pray oftener, till you will end in praying without ceasing.'

5. Again, always make hay when the sun shines. As thus: And the Lord

descended and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And when Moses heard the name of the Lord, he made haste, and bowed his head to the earth, and worshipped God, and said, If now I have found grace in thy sight, pardon our sin and our iniquity, and take us for Thine inheritance. Yes; make haste to make hay when the sun shines.

6. Again if you are an experienced man in these spiritual matters you will be able to turn both your past transgressions and your present temptations to your greater prosperity in the life of prayer. 'My sin is ever before me,' said David, when he was engaged on the composition of his greatest psalm. 'I am always sinning,' said Luther, 'and I am always reading the Epistle to the Romans, and am always praying.'

7. And again, when you ask the advice of the old experts in this matter they will all tell you to set apart a special time for prayer, and even a special place. James Durham, the laird of Pourie Castle, gave himself much to spiritual reading. And he caused build a study for himself on the head of the stair in his house in the country, three miles out the Forfar road on the way out of Dundee. In this little chamber that great scholar, great divine, and great saint gave himself continually to reading and meditation and prayer, and he was so close a student that he often forgot to eat his bread even after his servant had set it on his table. And like Durham the New England Fathers were wont to build their houses with a secret room for secret prayer. And Shepard looked on it as a sure sign of declension when the New England architects got no orders to put such secret rooms in their plans for new houses.

8. Speaking about secret rooms and secret prayers, a friend of mine has this devotional device put up on his most shut-in wall. He has a long picture-frame with the portraits of all his family fixed into the frame from the oldest to the youngest. And then hanging above that frame he has a fine head of Jesus Christ, which is so hung that the Intercessor looks down night and day on the children's portraits below as if He were making continual intercession for them, as indeed He is. And instead of that standing in room of his own prayer for his children and thus discharging him from it as we might think the danger was, my friend assures me that the sight of that wall night and morning draws him down to his knees, when but for that reminding and quickening wall he would often forget to pray. You might try some such device yourselves, as many of you as have a bad conscience both toward God and toward your children in this matter of secret and intercessory prayer in their behalf.

What are these, and whence came they? These are they who were born and brought up in a baptized home, but were never prayed for, to call prayer, and were never taught to pray for themselves. They took a high place at school and at college but they were never taught to pray. Their fathers and their mothers were church members, but they never took the trouble to teach their children to pray. And when they became fathers and mothers themselves the entail of prayerlessness and neglect of God descended to their children also. Therefore they are where they are. And therefore it is with them and with their children as it is. My brethren, if prayer is anything at all it is everything. And that is exactly what the whole Word of God says about prayer; it is everything, absolutely everything.

"So Then" by Alexander Whyte

Introduction:

This sermon is taken from a series of sermons Alexander Whyte preached on the Puritan Thomas Goodwin. Though Whyte read many Puritans, Goodwin was probably his favorite. Not only was Goodwin his favorite Puritan but the topic addressed in this sermon, indwelling sin, was one he continually expounded. His sense of sin was crushing and he was known throughout the land as a prophet of sin. No hidden crevice of the black depths of the human heart escaped the Scripture spotlight be beamed on it. This particular sermon, which is on Romans 7, was written so that the redeemed might know the plague of their own hearts. Whyte told his congregation more than once, "You'll never get out of the seventh of Romans while I'm your minister." (G. F. Barbour, *The Life of Alexander Whyte D. D.*, p. 305)

Why this continual exposure of the ugliness of sin? Why this delving into the dark recesses of the heart? Perhaps these words of John Bunyan from *The Holy War* will explain. In speaking to Mansoul (a redeemed sinner) Emmanuel (Christ) speaks these words about sin: "Nothing can hurt thee but sin; nothing can grieve Me but sin; nothing can make thee base before thy foes but sin; take heed of sin." (Bunyan, *The Holy War*, p. 335) So then, should we not also take heed of sin?

[Note: This sermon is preached from the standpoint that Paul is speaking about his sanctification in Romans 7. In our sanctification we have three enemies; the world, the flesh, and the devil. In the following the enemy of the flesh (indwelling sin) will be dealt with. Look for the distinctions made between the mind, the affections, and the will in the battle which rages in the Christian.]
Sermon: *So Then* by Alexander Whyte *The Spiritual Life the Teaching of Thomas Goodwin as Received and Reissued*, pp. 109-120

To begin with, -- what exactly does this little word "so" mean in the text? This little word "so" as it comes to us from Paul's pen at the close of the most experimental and the most pungent passage the Apostle ever wrote -- what does it really mean? Let us ask that question at the previous context, and at our own hearts, till we get a satisfactory answer to it. For this so innocent-looking little word will be sure to elude us and deceive us unless we arrest it and put it under pressure so as to compel it to yield up to us the whole of Paul's mind in penning it. But when we do put this so elusive little word under sufficient pressure, and when we bestow sufficient scrutiny upon it, we come to see that, small as it is, this little word sums up into itself the deepest experiences of the deepest-souled man, the most spiritually-minded man, and the most heavenly-minded man that ever lived. Yes; this one little word "so" here sums up, and puts into the smallest of syllables, the whole of the foregoing chapter, which is the deepest the most heart-searching and the most heartbroken chapter that ever was written since writing was . For one thing, this little word "so" contains within itself all this. Putting his whole life before his conversion into his own so vivid and so powerful words, Paul tells us that he was at one time "alive without the law." He was what he calls alive as long as the holy law of God remained wholly outside of his inward life. But when the law of God, in all its intense spirituality, really

penetrated into Paul's mind, and heart, and conscience, and imagination, then he died - died, he means, to all his previous self-righteousness, self-satisfaction, self-complacency, self-importance, and to all peace with God and with himself. To all that Paul was henceforth as good as a dead man. When the holy law of God really entered Paul's conscience and demanded of him that on pain of death and hell he must not covet what any other man possesses, nor envy any other man, nor hate any other man, nor have any ill-will at any other man, nor think, nor speak, nor do against any other man what he would not like to have thought or spoken or done against himself - that so holy, so spiritual, and so heart-searching law of God he found to be absolutely death and hell to him. You all understand that, I am sure. At any rate, as many of you as have come through that same heart-searching and heart-breaking experience; and especially as many of you as are passing more and more through that same heart-searching and heart-breaking experience every day you live.

Then, again, "sold under sin," - that is another terrible experience and terrible expression of the Apostle. Sold under that cruelest and hatefulest of all slave-driving masters. And then this wonderful saint and wonderful writer proceeds to open us to all his like-minded readers his own innermost experience as a slave sold under sin. Like a sold slave Paul pants to be free. But he soon finds that perfect freedom from the tyranny of his indwelling sin is absolutely impossible to him. A slave's will is free. No master, the most tyrannical, can chain up a slave's will; while all the time his hands and his feet are bound fast in fetters of iron. But no fetters were ever riveted on any slave's hands and feet that he so hated, and so cursed, and so kicked against as Paul hated, and cursed, and kicked against those fetters of indwelling sin under the cruel dominion of which he so continually agonized. Yes, great thanks be to God, Paul's will is free. As our Pauline Catechism - the most Pauline of all the catechisms - has it, in our effectual calling our minds are savingly enlightened, and our wills are savingly renewed. Now, Paul's will was savingly renewed in his effectual calling - savingly renewed as, I suppose, no other man's mind and will have ever been so savingly renewed. But not yet his heart; not yet his whole heart; not yet his whole spirit and disposition and inclination and affection. Paul's whole will was now wholly set upon always thinking and feeling and wishing what was good, both toward God and toward all men. But with all that there were still the remains of his original sin lurking deep down in his imperfectly sanctified heart. And thus it was that his better mind and better will were so often forerun and forestalled; overrun and overrun by the uprush of the inward sinfulness that still dwelt deep down within him. In the most heart-breaking chapter that ever was written in this world the greatest writer in this world displays to us the supreme tragedy of this world - that is to say, his sanctified mind and will everlastingly warring within him against his still unrenewed heart - everlastingly warring within him till he is the wretchedest man on the face of the earth; just because in his mind and in his will he is the holiest of men.

And again, mark this, and mark all that follows from this: Again and again and again Paul tells us that he "finds" all that to be the constant case within himself. Paul's indwelling sin and its accursed slavery was not a doctrine that he had been taught in any school, Jewish or Christian. For lessons in the doctrine of original and indwelling sin Paul had not sat at any man's feet: prophet, nor psalmist, nor apostle. Whether they all taught that doctrine or not he does not stop to say. But what he does say, and with all his might, is this: that indwelling sin is not a doctrine at all to him. No; to him it is a sure experience. It is not even a divine doctrine to him, so much as

a spiritual and a personal experience: a daily, a bitter, a hateful, a loathsome, a cruel, and a lifelong spiritual experience. "And then, among other things," says John Owen, that most Pauline of men, "this inward experience of Paul is the great guarantee and the sure preservative of evangelical truth in Paul's mind, and heart, and doctrine; just as it is in every man's mind, and heart, and doctrine who has Paul's spiritual experience." No man need attempt to argue Paul - no, nor any of Paul's successors - out of this so experimental and so personal truth, because they all "find" it in themselves. Incontestably so, according to the depth and the sincerity and the spirituality of their minds and their hearts. 'I know it,' says the Apostle. 'I know it, beyond all possible dispute or shadow of doubt. For I find it within my own soul, continually and incessantly, and that to my cost, to my shame, and to my deepest pain; to a shame and to a pain that are simply indescribable and inconsolable.' "Some," says John Owen, summing up his great masterpiece on this deep matter - "some pretend to great natural virtue, and some to great gospel perfection, but I am resolved to believe the Apostle and my own experience." And so am I.

"So, then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin." That is to say, since all that is "so" with me, Paul, and since all that has been so with me ever since my conversion - and is not less so, but is every new day more so - "then" let me penitently and contritely, and humbly, and resignedly make up my mind and lay my account with all my divinely ordained condition in this life. Let me take up this awful inward cross of mine; let me endure to the end this cruelest of all thorns of mine, and follow after the holy law of God, if with ever-bleeding feet, till the end comes. And let me believe and be sure that His grace is sufficient for me, and that His strength will be perfect in all my weakness. Let me live ever near the fountain opened for such awful uncleanness as mine, and keep my heart ever open to His holy and indwelling Spirit till the day dawns when He shall unloose all my remaining bonds, and give me my full and everlasting discharge from this terrible battle. All that, and much more than all that, is summed up in these two all-containing words of Paul: "So, then." "So, then, with the mind, I myself serve the law of God, but with the remainders of the flesh the law of sin." Now, my brethren, my Pauline-minded brethren, be you few or many this morning, carrying all that with us, let us come home to ourselves. And as Paul has here written his most inward, most secret, and most spiritual experience for our learning - for our best learning - let us honestly and courageously imitate him and read out our own spiritual experience to ourselves and to one another. And, accordingly, if you will accompany me, I will now read out to you some of your own most inward and most painful, but at the same time, most spiritual and most soul-sanctifying experiences - yours and mine. And, since Paul is so nobly plain-spoken about himself, let me err on the same side, with you and with myself.

Well, then, there are certain men planted by God's special appointment all around you and me. Paul does not name his God-planted and God-appointed men and neither will I name yours nor mine. But they are there. And I am sure that we often name them to ourselves and to God, as Paul often did. Men whom we do not love and who do not love us; men whom we have hurt and who have hurt us; men who stand in our way and oppose and hinder and obstruct us; men who possess name and fame and place and honor and reward that we would fain possess, and so on and so on, in this whole world of such unceasing trial and temptation. And as often as we read or hear the names of those men, as often as we pass their doors and windows, as often as we meet them, or any of theirs on the street, like Paul's evil heart, our evil heart rises up in

enmity and in malice against them. But the next moment our will, our renewed and sanctified will, denounces our evil heart and refuses to join with our evil heart in its evil ways. Now, at that enslaved moment ours is a case of what the old experimental divines were wont to call *motus prime non cadunt sub libertatem*. 'Mat is to say, the first motions of sin in our evil heart do not come under the jurisdiction of our will. But to make up for that, as far as may be, our renewed will rises up immediately and repudiates our evil heart, and immediately proceeds against it, and in this way. 'Me very next moment after that sudden uprush of indwelling sin from our heart our better will turns to God on the spot - on the very street sometimes - and cries to Him for instantaneous pardon and for a clean heart Aye, and more than all that, far more than all that, and far more well-pleasing to God than all that - we protest to Him as He is our Witness and our Judge that, if He will only put it in our power to do that enemy of ours a service - him, or any of his - we swear to God that we will immediately and rejoicingly do it. Now, that was Paul's case exactly at the moment when he was penning his seventh chapter to the Romans. And so much is our case the same as his was, that if he had omitted to pen that chapter to the saints at Rome, by the same Spirit and out of the same experience we would have penned it for ourselves. For we know, quite as well as Paul knew, that the law is spiritual, but that we, in many things, are still inwardly sinful, and are as much sold under sin as ever he was.

I have kept you too long already, I fear, on this not very easy and not very pleasant and not very acceptable argument. But if you will bear with me I have still a few words I would like to say. For one thing, you will be glad to be told that this deep spiritual experience of the Apostle is not confined to Calvinists and Puritans such as I have named. Take our old Bible-class friend, Santa Teresa, for one. I open her classical autobiography and I read this: "God leads His people in the way He chooses out as the best for them and for His special purposes with them individually. Whom the Lord specially loveth He layeth on them His special cross. And the heaviest of all His special crosses is a life of sanctification and service without sensible consolation. It is indeed a very great misery to live on in this evil world where our deadly enemies are ever at our door, and where we can neither eat nor sleep nor work nor rest in peace, but are compelled to have our armor on night and day. There is no rest nor happiness here, nor will be till we are home with the everlastingly Blessed. As I write," she says, "I am seized with terror lest I should never escape this sinful life. I know one who often wishes for death in order that she may be freed from the torment of her sinful heart. Her fear is not so much of hell as that she should so grieve God's Holy Spirit that He will be wearied out with her and so forsake her and leave her in here sins." The Catholic saint does not in so many words mention the seventh of the Romans, but I can see that every verse of it is deep down in her mind and in her heart, as it was in the mind and heart of an old Puritan saint lately gone to his rest, whose extended pilgrimage was over ninety years, and who often said that he must have been often swallowed up of despair had it not been for the seventh chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans.

Now, my more thoughtful brethren, arising out of all that, it has been a great problem with all the greatest saints and with all the deepest divines in all ages - this great problem: Why is it that the Holy Spirit so leaves the seventh of the Romans, more or less, in the souls of all the truly regenerate? Why is it that He takes them all through this terrible experience, more or less? Now, what would you say toward the solution of that great problem? For you must be studying that great problem, many of you, more than any other problem on the face of the earth. Well,

what do you say to it? Are you getting any light upon God's mind and will with you in this so mysterious matter? Can you at all justify and vindicate Him when He is judged and blamed in this so perplexing and so painful matter? Are you learning anything about the deepest of all God's ways with His saints as these years of such spiritual suffering go on with you? There is an old proverb to this effect, that experience teaches, even fools. Well, is your experience teaching you anything worth calling teaching? There is more than a proverb in this of Paul in his eighth chapter that all things work together for good. And the Apostle does not exclude from that law even your indwelling sin. Well, look down into your own sinful heart and see. And I will say this concerning some of you, with some personal experience of what I say: Is not your indwelling sin teaching you lessons about itself, lessons that you could never have learned but from itself? Is not your indwelling, tyrannizing, enslaving sin teaching you lessons concerning its power and its persistence and its depth and its malignity and its absolutely unspeakable wickedness - lessons and experiences that break your heart every day you live? And anything and everything that breaks your heart every day is good - indeed, is your best good - in this present life. And that because the sacrifices of God, the every morning and the every night sacrifices of God, are a broken heart. And, then, is not this so also - that with your daily broken hearts you are putting on every day a new humility and a new patience with God and with all men and with yourselves? As, also, an ever new prayerfulness, and an ever new faith in Christ and an ever new love for the word of God and for spiritual reading and spiritual preaching? And, above all, far, far above all - Jesus Christ Himself is beginning to get His right place with you and within you. A place He would never have got but for your indwelling sin.

This is Goodwin's winding up: -

"When the Apostle, long after his first conversion, was in the midst of that great and famous battle chronicled in the seventh of Romans, presently upon that woeful outcry, O wretched man that I am! he falls admiring the grace of justification through Christ. Now, he says, there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ. Mark that word now: that now, after such bloody wounds and gashes, there should be no condemnation, this exceedingly exalts the grace of justification. For if ever, thought he, I was in danger of condemnation it was upon the rising and the rebelling of those my corruptions. But I find, says he, that God still pardons me, and accepts me as much as ever upon my returning to Him. Now this is a Gospel indeed."

And this is the winding up of Walter Marshall, Goodwin's greatest disciple: "Let us observe and consider diligently in our whole conversation that though we are partakers of a holy state by faith in Christ, yet our natural state doth remain, in a measure, with all its corrupt principles and properties. Therefore, we must be content to leave the natural man in us vile and wicked, as we found it, until it is utterly abolished by death..... And all this serveth to work self-loathing, and self-abasement and to make us look upon nature as desperately wicked, and not to be reformed but by putting on Christ. It remains wicked, and only wicked, even after we have put on Christ, though we must not allow its wickedness, but rather groan to be delivered from the body of this death, thanking God that there is a deliverance through Jesus Christ our Lord."

"How His Zeal Ate Him Up" by Alexander Whyte

[The Walk, Conversation and Character of Jesus Christ Our Lord, pp. 151-161]

'The visual image' of zeal, as Coleridge calls it, is a boiling pot. Zew, to boil, is the Greek root of our well-known English word zeal. And then, as is the way with all such like words, zeal soon passes over from the material and the sensible world into the intellectual and the moral and the spiritual world. Till we find this so vivid word exclusively made use of to describe a boiling heart; a heart boiling up and boiling over with the intense heat of its own affections, and passions, and emotions. Properly speaking, there is only one kind of boiling water, but there are two entirely opposite kinds of boiling blood. There is the boiling of the blood of a bad heart, and there is the boiling of the blood of a good heart, with all the wholly opposite results that boil over from these so opposite boiling hearts. Now let us glance, to begin with, at some of the bad kinds of boiling hearts, so as to clear our way to the good kinds. To such good kinds as the boiling heart of our Lord, when He made a scourge of small cords and cleansed the temple, till His disciples remembered that it was written - The zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up.

The first time that the word zeal, in its bad sense, occurs in Holy Scripture, is in the case of King Saul, that so hot-headed and so God-abandoned man. In his sinful zeal, and in the teeth of the friendly treaty that had been made with the Gibeonites, Saul slew those allies of Israel, and thus brought untold trouble on himself, on his family, and on his people. 'Come,' said King Jehu also, 'and see my zeal for the Lord.' But all the time Jehu's zeal was wholly for himself, and not for the Lord at all. Jehu was zealous indeed for the Lord's commandments, but all he did was in order that he might be seen of men. As was to be expected we come often both on the name zeal and on the thing itself in the epistles of Paul, that most hot-hearted of men. And both the name of zeal and the thing occur, sometimes in a bad sense, and sometimes in a good sense, in the ardent pages of the Apostle. Speaking in one place of the unconverted Jews, the apostle says - 'I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.' A most pungent, and far-reaching, and much-needed condemnation. For absolutely all the superstitions, and almost all the persecutions, and almost all the divisions that have desolated the Church of Christ from that day to this, are to be traced up to this, are to be traced up to this same wickedness-working zeal without knowledge. And then with all his rare self-knowledge, and with all his noble honesty of conscience, the Apostle discovers and confesses and denounces that same wicked heat in his own heart. 'Beyond measure I persecuted the Church of God, and wasted it. Being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.' 'Zeal without knowledge,' says John Foster, in a strong sermon of his on this subject, 'has been one of the most dreadful pests that has ever afflicted the earth. Zeal without knowledge has been the very strength, and soul, and animating demon, of every active evil. View zeal without knowledge in connection with any evil passion; in connection with hatred, with revenge, with love of power, and see what woe it will work!' Again, there is another evil zeal that is not real zeal at all, but is only so much bad temper. This spurious and hypocritical zeal is loud and ostentatious in its defense of this truth and that duty. But all the time, at his heart of hearts, truth and duty are nothing to that bad man but a mere occasion for his own maliciousness and ill-will. Our evil hearts are in nothing more deceitful to ourselves, or more wicked in the sight of God, than just in the way we cloke over our own wicked passions with a mask of holy zeal. When, all the time, underneath that mask, there is little or nothing else but our

own malevolence. 'Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of,' says our Lord to us. Telling us that if we but knew ourselves, we would see ourselves to be of the spirit of the devil.

Then again there is a true but a mischievously disproportionate zeal widespread even among the best men. A zeal that is quite out of all keeping with the proper value of the thing pursued, or defended, as the case may be. The thing he takes up may be true enough and good enough so far as it goes, but it is not everything, as the extravagant zealot thinks it is, and will thrust it down your throat that it is. And then the worst of all zeals surely, is that pestiferous zeal for our own party, which is so universal, and is so popular, and is so well-paid among us. This is a zeal also that is not seldom without knowledge, and is determined to remain so. But its real wickedness stands in this rather, that it is absolutely without truth, without justice, and without love. Truth and justice and love live in another world altogether than that world from which that man's so selfish and so truculent zeal is kindled and fed and paid. The absolutely savage zeal of our political, and ecclesiastical, and all our other parties, is the scandal of our public life. And it is enough to drive all good men out of public life altogether. My brethren, I beseech you to watch and pray and labor to keep your hearts and your hands clean of all the detestable vices that are constantly engendered in your hearts by the heat of party spirit. As clean, that is, as is possible in this so divided-up, so hating, and so hateful, and so intolerant world. And, where it is simply not possible always to keep yourselves pure under the constant pressure of this temptation; then, let all these evil things both in you and in your opponents work in you a more and more weaned, and a more and more broken heart. Always comforting yourselves with this assurance that it is to produce for Himself a people of such weaned and broken hearts that the God of truth and of peace and of love permits such party spirit to poison this world. It is an ennobling and an all-conquering thought that God in His grace has undertaken to make all things, and the heat of party spirit among them, to work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.

But it is time to turn to the many good kinds of zeal that are set before us in Holy Scripture. And there are some magnificent anthropomorphisms paid to a holy zeal in the Old Testament and especially in the prophet Isaiah. As thus - 'Of the increase of His government and peace, there shall be no end. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this.' And this - 'He put on righteousness for a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon His head; and He put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as with a cloke.' And again - 'Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of Thy holiness and of Thy glory; where is Thy zeal and Thy strength, the sounding of Thy bowels, and of Thy mercies toward me? Are they restrained?' And then in the New Testament we are familiar with such fine uses of the figure as these: - 'Yea, what fear; yea, what vehement desire; yea, what zeal; yea, what revenge.' And again - 'Who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.' And once more - 'As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten; be zealous, therefore, and repent.'

Matthew Henry is always the most shrewd and the most natural and the most forcible of commentators. 'The disciples,' he says, 'were greatly surprised and disconcerted to see the Lamb of God in such a heat that day in the temple. And to see Him, whom they believed to be the King of Israel, taking so little of His kingly state upon Himself as to make, and with His own hands, a

scourge of small cords, and with that scourge to drive the money-changers out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen. And, actually, to pour out the changers' money, and overthrow their tables, and all with His own hands. The disciples did not know where to look, or what to say, till this Messianic Psalm came to their minds, the zeal of Thine house hath eaten Me up.'

Now, to be eaten up of anything is to this day a very arresting expression. It must have been a very arresting expression when it was first employed. And the arresting original has been rendered literally, and has been used liberally, in our own language ever since. It is indeed a very arresting and even startling thing to hear it said of our Lord that anything could actually eat Him up. Yes; but look at Him. Go back and look at Him that day in the temple. Think you see Him. Think you stand beside Him. Think who He is, and what is His real errand in this world. And the more you think about Him, and the closer you come up to Him, and the better you see Him, the better will you enter into this startling language concerning Him. Yes; such was the dreadful desecration of His Father's house that day, that He was simply eaten up with His indignation at it all. That is to say, all sense of fear at what the rulers of the temple might do to Him was eaten up in our Lord that day. All sense of shame also at what He felt compelled to do was eaten up. All thought and all feeling of the unseemliness of such as He was, condescending to such an act as that in public was all eaten up. All His lamblike meekness also was for the moment wholly eaten up. All these things, and everything else, was wholly eaten up, as the text has it. Such was the wrath of the Lamb at the scene He saw going on in His Father's house that day.

Now was that a sudden or an occasional and a soon-exhausted ebullition of early zeal on the part of our Lord. Far from that. For just as He began His Messianic ministry in the temple that day, so He carried on His whole ministry, till at last His all-consuming zeal carried Him up to the cross. From the beginning to the end of His life on earth our Lord had no heart left for anything but to fulfil His Messianic mission. In His own words about Himself His meat and His drink was to finish His Messianic work. It was His holy zeal that both sustained Him and impelled Him all through His life, and the same ruling passion was at its greatest strength in His death. His disciples remembered that Old Testament text in the temple that day. And having once remembered it they were never let forget it again, all the time they companied with Him. And how well they must have remembered it, and must have said it to one another, as they all forsook Him and fled! The zeal of His Father's house hath eaten Him up! they must have said to themselves as they stood afar off and saw His crucifixion consummated.

And then no sooner were the disciples left alone, and no sooner were they all filled with the Holy Ghost, than their Risen Lord demanded of them every day what they had seen in Him every day. The servants were all to be, in this matter also, as their Master. For as He was simply eaten up of His Messianic office, so were they to be eaten up of their Apostolic office. And it was so, in their measure, with them all. Till in their zeal even unto death, they had overcome and had overthrown the Pagan world, and had achieved the spread and the establishment of the Church of Christ. And especially that Apostle of His who had by far the most of his Master's heat of heart in him. You all know how Paul's hot heart absolutely ate him up. Jesus Christ so completely ate up Paul's whole heart that he had not an atom of heart left for anything else. Paul was so eaten up of Christ that he had no heart left for wife, or for child, or for fame, or for fatherland, or for any of those things that were eating up all other men in that day. Love of power had just eaten up Julius Caesar. Love of praise had just eaten up Tullius Cicero. Love of liberty

had just eaten up Marcus Cato. And love of pleasure Mark Antony. But over against all those great men of that great day stands a far greater than any of them. And his unapproached greatness stands rooted and grounded in his all-consuming zeal for the Son of God, his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. So absolutely eaten up was Paul of Jesus Christ that he but spake the simple truth about himself when he said such things as these - 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.' 'What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.' 'To me to live is Christ and to die is gain.' O, greatest of men! O, best of men! O, happiest of men! O, most blessed of men! Well mayest thou appeal and say to all such cold-hearted creatures as we are - 'Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ!'

Now who here will accept Paul's lofty challenge? Who here is fired tonight with that magnificent emulation and ambition? Are you? Well, the thing is in your own hand. The torch to kindle your own heart to that heavenly heat is in your own hand. And that torch is this - Think about Christ. Just think about Christ, and that will do it. Thinking about one another; meditating on one another; imagining one another, - that makes your hearts hot towards one another. And so is it with your soul and Christ. Thinking about Him will do it. Meditating on Him will do it. Imagining you see Him will do it. 'My heart was hot within me. While I was musing, the fire burned,' says David. And as often as we muse on Christ the fire burns with us also. And the longer we muse on Him, and the deeper our musing goes, the more the fire burns. And this fire never sinks low, far less ever dies out, as long as we so muse. Think enough, meditating enough, musing enough on Christ, will do it. Thinking that always ends in prayer, and in praise, and in repentance unto life, and in ever new obedience, that will do it. Think you see Christ all through the Four Gospels. Think you see Him die at the end of the Four Gospels. Think you see Him rise again. Think you see Him ascend up into heaven. Think that it is the day of judgment. And think you see the books opened, - till you cry to Him continually day and night, Rock of Ages, cleft for me! You have it in your own hand to melt your heart of ice into one pool of holy love. Yes; if you like you can read, and think and pray yourselves into the possession of a heart as hot as Paul's heart. Ay, into a heart as eaten up of your Father's house on earth and in heaven as Christ's own heart was. For the same Holy Ghost who gave Christ His hot heart, and Paul his hot heart, is given to you also. The time is long till you come to that, but the thing is true. For, behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. Be zealous, therefore, and repent.

**"I Found that Ancient Christian To Be a Good Man,
But a Stranger to Much Combat with the Devil"**

by Alexander Whyte

Bunyan Himself as Seen in His Grace Abounding,

Bunyan Characters Fourth

Series, pp.62-71

Young Bunyan was far more fortunate with the ancient women of his acquaintance than he was with the ancient men. The three or four ancient women who sat one day at a door in the sun and talked together in young Bunyan's hearing about the things of God were nothing less than so many mothers in Israel to this fatherless and motherless lad. But this ancient Christian man gave young Bunyan but cold comfort when he told him all his anxious and sorrowful story. He was a good man, Bunyan admits, but he had not gone very deep into his own heart, nor had the tempter troubled him very much either about his heart or his life. For some reason or other the enemy of human souls did not give much attention to this ancient Christian. And thus it was that the old man had no understanding whatever of young Bunyan's much-tried and much-tempted case. When he was consulted the stupid old creature gave it as his decided opinion that the young tinker had already committed the unpardonable sin, and so was past hope. Bunyan does not say it in as many words, but I feel sure that he knocked at the door of some of those ancient and much-experienced women on his weary way home that dark day.

Compared with those three or four ancient women, and compared even with this young inquirer, that ancient Christian man had lived a sheltered, a peaceful, and an easy life. Ancient, as by this time he was; and neophyte, as Bunyan still was; Bunyan's depreciatory description of himself at that period does not need to be much altered to make it exactly applicable to his old friend. For if this ancient Christian had indeed been born again, the thought of that did not much occupy the old man's mind. Neither knew he aught of the treachery and the deceitfulness of his own heart. And as for his secret thoughts, he took no notice of them at all. The truth is, born again as he undoubtedly was, and old man as he now was, the shell was still on his ancient head, he was still but a babe at the breast.

Now you will stop me at this point and will say to me that such a stupid old creature as that could not surely be a really Christian man at all. But don't be so severe. Don't be so exacting in your demands on old Christian men. Don't be so ready to excommunicate and to reprobate old men or young men either who may not have had all the length and breadth and height and depth of your spiritual experience. Young Bunyan was not so harsh in his judgments as you are. It is true that this ancient Christian man was as blind as any Bedfordshire mole to all Bunyan's extraordinary experiences. But Bunyan never so much as once suggests that the innocent old man was other than a true Christian according to his type and according to his attainments. At the same time, he feels bound to admit that this ancient and not untrue Christian was a total stranger to anything that could be called a combat with the devil and with the sin of his own heart. Now, how are we to account for the existence of that man, and of so many men like him among ourselves also? Especially when we see that some other men's hearts and lives among us are all combat together. All combat together, and without a single day's discharge all their life from this fearful inward war.

Well to begin with, the commander of an army selects and allots and places his soldiers as

pleases himself. He appoints his men their duties, and their dangers, and their opportunities, as seems good, and wise, and safe, in his own eyes. And thus it is that some soldiers are always set in the hottest front of the hottest battle, while some other soldiers are always to be found in the rear, till they are rather so many camp-followers than real soldiers. Some so-called soldiers never rise above being raw recruits all their days, while some others are always at the head of some forlorn hope or other, somewhere or other. Some so-called soldiers are so many drawing-room ornaments rather than real soldiers: they are always to be seen on a street parade before a crowd of admiring boys; while some other soldiers are not fit to be seen with their torn uniforms, and their gaping wounds, and their clotted blood, and their broken swords. And so is it in the army of Jesus Christ the Captain of our salvation. Let some of His good soldiers be described in one sentence of a fine book about them: 'Who through faith subdued kingdoms,' we read, 'wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens; others were tortured not accepting deliverance, they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy.' John Bunyan was always far more at home with such torn and dismembered heroes as these, than he was with that ancient Christian in Bedford who had never been half a mile away from his own chimney corner.

Many country clowns and city loungers have taken the King's shilling who will never all their days really earn it. They have just passed the standard for height and weight and scarcely that; their eyes and their ears and their teeth and the beating of their hearts have barely got their certificate. You will sometimes see an undersized, ill-knit, narrow-chested, wax-complexioned stripling wearing the King's uniform, till you cannot help wondering how he ever passed his examination, and what the King's army is to make of him. And the sight of him calls to mind many so-called soldiers of Jesus Christ among us. They will, no doubt, be of some use, sometime and somewhere; but it will not be in much combat with the devil and with their own hearts that they will ever win their spurs. The old enemy altogether ignores them. He absolutely despises them. He leaves them all their days in an unbroken peace, while he sets on some other men with all his hellish fury, and that too without ceasing. 'Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the King of Israel,' said the King of Syria. And these are sometimes the devil's exact orders to his soldiers also. 'Fight you to the death with that dangerous young tinker,' said the devil, pointing to young John Bunyan. 'Bring me his head in a charger, and I will give you an increase of rations, and a red-ribbon for your shoulder-knot.' Now, after hearing that, if any of you have the curiosity to know how that combat went on and how it ended in the case of John Bunyan, you may read all that in his fine chapters on Greatheart and Standfast, as also in his Grace Abounding and in his Holy War. Alexander the Great had always under his pillow, both in the palace and in the field, a small silver casket which contained nothing but his lifelong copy of Homer. And all of you who are always in the high places of the field have, I warrant you, the Psalms, and the Romans, and the Revelation, and the Grace Abounding always within reach of your camp-bed. But on the other hand, there are many ancient Christians among us who never once slept with their clothes on and their sword beside them all their days. And when you speak to them about having their Homers within reach they do not know what you are saying: they never spent a shilling on a Homer all their days. 'Add to this,' says M. Bremond in his masterly and most

delightful book, *The Mystery of Newman*, 'add to this, a multitude of good people resign themselves to a life without any combat in it at all. They are not bad Christians; but they are satisfied with a cold and dry religion. The spiritual battles of the soul do not trouble them.' And then he quotes this passage from the great preacher himself: 'They are most excellent men, in their way, but they do not walk in a lofty path. There is nothing at all unearthly about them. They do not take time to contemplate, and to prepare for, the world to come. They do not wait on God all the day. They weary of watching for Him. They do not feel that they are in a world with a height above it, and with a depth beneath it. They have no difficulties in their religion; they think everything plain and easy.' In short, they are total strangers, as John Bunyan would say, to much combat with the devil, and with the sinfulness of their own hearts.

Now, the deepest of the Apostles gives us the whole explanation of all that superficiality and shallowness in one word of his, when he says that the law of God had never once really entered the minds and the hearts and the imaginations and the consciences of those self-complacent men. With the greatest of the Apostles everything turns on the entrance or the non-entrance of God's holy law. Speaking for himself, the whole difference between Saul the Pharisee, and Paul the greatest of God's saints, was simply this, that the holy law of God had now pierced to the dividing asunder of his soul and his spirit, and of his joints and his marrow: the holy law of God, in every commandment of it, was now a discernor of every thought and every intent of Paul's half-sanctified heart. And the whole difference between this stupid old man and the future author of the *Grace Abounding* was the same thing, the law had entered the young man's heart to all its depth, whereas it had scarcely so much as grazed the surface of the old man's skin. As our great Highland preachers were wont to say, there had never been any real 'law-work' in that ancient man's heart; while, on the other hand, every paragraph of poor Bunyan's autobiography brings out some new combat of his with the devil and with his own inward evil. Some new combat about sin and about the forgiveness of sin. Some new combat about faith, both as it justifies the ungodly and as it sanctifies the godly. Some new combat about the Bible, and about the Apocrypha; everlasting combats indeed. Bunyan, all his days, was the King of Israel over again. You would have thought that the prince of darkness had no man in all England in his evil eye in those days but the future author of the *Pilgrim's Progress*, and the *Holy War*, and the *Grace Abounding*. Whereas Bunyan's ancient friend was as innocent of all those combats as any of yourselves. I say yourselves: for there are crowds of this ancient Christian's spiritual offspring among yourselves. Speak to them about the entrance of the law, and they will go about saying that you do not preach the Gospel. Speak to them about the exceeding sinfulness of heart-sin, and you might as well speak to them in Hebrew. Speak in their hearing about the depth and the difficulty of this or that divine truth; or speak in their hearing about the discoveries made by the Scripture scholarship of our day, and they will advertise you far and near for an infidel. 'Here, therefore, I had but cold comfort; but, talking a little more with him, I found him, though a good man, a stranger to much combat of any kind.' In Paul's all-explaining words, the law of truth and love and holiness had got little or no entrance into his ancient head and heart.

Now, young Bunyan's great mistake, which he here writes out for our warning was this, that he took his intricate case to the wrong counselor. He should have sought out some of those ancient women of Bedford into whose sinful hearts the holy law of God was entering deeper and deeper every day, and they would soon have resolved his whole case for him. 'A soldier who has

been in the wars can best tell another soldier how to fight,' says Jacob Behmen in his Way to Christ. Now if any of you have like John Bunyan been early chosen and enlisted and appointed to enter on a life-long combat with the devil and with your own heart, take good care what counselor you consult about that matter. And especially take good care what preachers you sit under and what authors you read. There are plenty of good men and able men and learned men in our pulpits today; but you will get but cold comfort from the best and the ablest of them unless, like John Bunyan and you, they are in a constant and an increasing combat themselves with John Bunyan's enemy and yours. But even if your combat is appointed you in a place where you have no choice of preachers, you can always choose your authors. Luther would be a first-rate author for you, if you could lay your hands on him, and Jacob Behmen, Luther's great disciple. But thank God you do not need to go outside your own tongue to read abundantly the same wonderful workings of the Spirit of God. For in your own richest of tongues, you have the immortal and inexhaustible Bunyan himself, and you have his great contemporaries - such as Baxter, and Owen, and Goodwin, and Sibbs in England; and Rutherford, and Brea, and Halyburton in Scotland; and after them Boston, and Chalmers, and M'Cheyne, and many more. 'O, but we have heard to weariness all these old-fashioned names and obsolete men!' you will say to me. 'Are you never to recommend to us some of the up-to-date authors!' you will say to me. So the slovens, and the camp-followers, and the cowards, and the deserters no doubt said to the great soldier who had never anything newer than Homer under his pillow. But our Homeric books are not run upon in Mudie's or in the Times bookstore. Only things called books, that sell by their thousands today, and line our trunks tomorrow. And hence our ignorance, and our cowardice, and our continual desertions from the great combats of the soul.

Take a closing word to the point out of Luther, that great combatant of the devil. He is speaking to the young preachers of his day. 'No,' he says, 'I did not learn to preach Christ all at once. It was my temptations and my corruptions that best prepared me for my pulpit. The devil has been my best professor of exegetical and experimental divinity. Before that great schoolmaster took me in hand, I was a sucking child and not a grown man. It was my combats with sin and with Satan that made me a true minister of the New Testament. It is always a great grace to me, and to my people, for me to be able to say to them: I know this text to be true! I know it for certain to be true! Without incessant combat, and pain, and sweat, and blood, no ignorant stripling of a student ever yet became a powerful preacher.' So says one of the most powerful preachers that ever entered the Pauline pulpit.

"Madam Bubble" by Alexander Whyte

Alexander Whyte, Second Series Bunyan Characters Lectures Delivered in St. George's Free Church Edinburgh, pp. 227-237

Part the Second of The Pilgrim's Progress is about Christian's wife, Christiana, and their four sons (Matthew, Samuel, Joseph, James), as they too set out on the pilgrim's path toward the Celestial City. They journey through the same places Christian did though they learn new lessons and they meet some of the same character as well as a few new ones. In the following sermon Alexander Whyte preached on a character from Part the Second, we will meet Madam Bubble a "bold and impudent slut" who Mr. Stand-fast encountered as he passed through the Enchanted Ground. May we "see more charms in Jesus, more glory in his cross, and more comfort in the enjoyment of his love and presence" and therefore by Divine power be delivered from Madam Bubble as we are invited to lay down our head in her lap and cast our eyes upon her supposed beauty.

Madam Bubble by Alexander Whyte

"Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." Solomon

"I have overcome the world." Our Lord

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof." John

"This bubble world." Quarles

Madam Bubble's portrait was first painted by the Preacher. And he painted her portrait with extraordinary insight, boldness, and truthfulness. There is that in the Preacher's portrait of Madam Bubble which only comes of the artist having mixed his colors, as Milman says that Tacitus mixed his ink, with resentment and remorse. Out of His reading of Solomon and Moses and the Prophets on this same subject, as well as out of His own observation and experience, conflict and conquest, our Lord added some strong and deep and inward touches of His own to that well-known picture, and then named it by the New Testament name of the World. And then, after Him, His longest-lived disciple set forth the same mother and her three daughters under the three names that still stick to them to this day, - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. But it was reserved for John Bunyan to fill up and to finish those outlines of Scripture and to pour over the whole work his own depth and strength of color, till, altogether, Madam Bubble stands out as yet another masterpiece of our dreamer's astonishing genius. Let us take our stand before this heaving canvas, then, till we have taken attentive note of some of John

Bunyan's inimitable touches and strokes and triumphs of truth and art. 'One in very pleasant attire, but old....This woman is a witch...I am the mistress of the world, she said, and men are made happy by me...A tall, comely dame, something of a swarthy complexion.' In the newly discovered portrait of a woman, by Albert Durer, one of the marks of its genuineness is the way that the great artist's initials A. D. are penciled in on the embroidery of the lady's bodice. And you will note in this gentlewoman's open dress also how J. B. is inextricably woven in. 'She wears a great purse by her side also, and her hand is often in her purse fingering her money. Yea, this is she that has bought off many a man from a pilgrim's life after he had fairly begun it. She is a bold and an impudent slut also, for she will talk with any man. If there be one cunning to make money in any place, she will speak well of him from house to house...She has given it out in some place also that she is a goddess, and therefore some do actually worship her... She has her times and open places of cheating, and she will say and avow it that none can show a good comparable to hers. And thus she has brought many to the halter, and ten thousand times more to hell. None can tell of the mischief that she does. She makes variance betwixt rulers and subjects, betwixt parents and children, 'twixt neighbor and neighbor, 'twixt a man and his wife, 'twixt a man and himself, 'twixt the flesh and the heart.' And so on in the great original. 'Had she stood by all this while,' said Standfast, whose eyes were still full of her, 'you could not have set Madam Bubble more amply before me, nor have better described her features.' 'He that drew her picture was a good limner,' said Mr. Honest, 'and he that so wrote of her said true.'

1. 'I am the mistress of this world,' says Madam Bubble. And though all the time she is a bold and impudent slut, yet it is the simple truth that she does sit as a queen over this world and over the men of this world. For Madam Bubble has a royal family like all other sovereigns. She has a court of her own, too, with its ball-room presentations and its birthday honors. She has a cabinet council also, and a bar and a bench with their pleadings and their decisions. Far more than all that, she has a church which she has established and of which she is the head; and a faith also of which she is the defender. She has a standing army also for the extension and the protection of her dominions. She levies taxes, too, and sends out ambassadors, and makes treaties, and forms offensive and defensive alliances. But what a bubble all this World is to him whose eyes have at last been opened to see the hollowness and the heartlessness of it all! For all its pursuits and all its possessions, from a child's rattle to a king's scepter, all is one great bubble. Wealth, fame, place, power: art, science, letters; politics, churches, sacraments, and scriptures -- all are so many bubbles in Madam Bubble's World. This wicked enchantress, if she does not find all these things bubbles already, by one touch of her evil wand she makes them so. She turns gold into dross, God into an idle name, and His Word into words only; unless when in her malice she turns it into a fruitful ground of debate and contention; a ground of malice and hatred and ill-will. Vanity of vanities; all is vanity and vexation of spirit. Still, she sits a queen and a goddess to a great multitude: to all men, to begin with. And, like a goddess, she sheds abroad her spirit in her people's hearts and lifts up upon them for a time the light of her countenance.

2. 'I am the mistress of the world,' she says, 'and men are made happy by me.' -- I would like to see one of them. I have seen many men to whom Madam Bubble had said that if they would be ruled by her she would make them great and happy. But though I have seen not a few who have

believed her and let themselves be ruled by her, I have never yet seen one happy man among them. -- The truth is, Madam Bubble is not able to make men happy even if she wished to do it. She is not happy herself, and she cannot dispense to others what she does not possess. And, yet, such are her sorceries that, while her old dupes die in thousands every day, new dupes are born to her every day in still greater numbers. New dupes who run to the same excess of folly with her that their fathers ran; new dupes led in the same mad dance after Madam Bubble and her three daughters. But, always, and to all men, what a bubble both the mother and all her daughters are! How they all make promises like their lying mother, and how, like her, they all lead men, if not to the halter and to hell, as Great-heart said, yet to a life of vanity and to a death of disappointment and despair! What bubbles of empty hopes both she and her three children blow up in the brains of men! What pictures of untold happiness they paint in the imaginations of men! What pleasures, what successes in life, what honors and what rewards she pledges herself to see bestowed! 'She has her times and open places of cheating,' said one who knew her and all her ways well. And when men and women are still young and inexperienced, that is one of her great cheating times. At some seasons of the year, and in some waters, to the fisherman's surprise and confusion, the fish will sometimes take his bare hook; a bit of a red rag is a deadly bait. And Madam Bubble's poorest and most perfunctory busking is quite enough for the foolish fish she angles for. And not in our salad days only, when we are still green in judgment, but even to gray hairs, this wicked witch continues to entrap us to our ruin. Love, in all its phases and in all its mixtures, first deluded the very young; and then place, and power, and fame, and money are the bait she busks for the middle-aged and the old; and always with the same bubble end. The whole truth is that without God, the living and ever-present God, in all ages of it and in all parts and experiences of it, our human life is one huge bubble. A far-shining, high-soaring bubble; but sooner or later seen and tasted to be a bubble -- a deceit-filled, poison-filled bubble. -- Happy by her! All men happy by her! The impudent slut!

3. Another thing about this slut is this, that 'she will talk with any man.' She makes up to us and makes eyes at us just as if we were free to accept and return her three offers. And still she talks to us and offers us the same things she offered to Standfast till, to escape her and her offers, he betook himself to his knees. Nay, truth to tell, after she had deceived us and ensnared us till we lay in her net cursing both her and ourselves, so bold and so impudent and so persistent is this temptress slut, and such fools and idiots are we, that we soon lay our eyes on her painted beauty again and our heads in her loathsome lap; our heads on that block over which the axe hangs by an angry hair. 'She will talk with any man.' No doubt; but, then, it takes two to make a talk, and the sad thing is that there are few men among us so wise, so steadfast, and so experienced in her ways that they will not on occasion let Madam Bubble talk her talk to them, and talk back again to her. The oldest saint, the oftenest sold and most dearly redeemed sinner, needs to suspect himself to the end, till he is clear out of Madam Bubble and all her daughters into the dead sea for ever.

'The gray-haired saint may fail at last,
The surest guide a wanderer prove;
Death only binds us fast
To the bright shore of love.'

4. 'She highly commends the rich,' the guide goes on about Madam Bubble, 'and if there be one cunning to get money in any place she will speak well of him from house to house.' 'The world,' says Faber, 'is not altogether matter, nor yet altogether spirit. It is not man only, nor Satan only, nor is it exactly sin. It is an infection, an inspiration, an atmosphere, a life, a coloring matter, a pageantry, a fashion, a taste, a witchery. None of all these names suit it, and all of them suit it. Meanwhile its power over the human creation is terrific, its presence ubiquitous, its deceitfulness incredible. It can find a home under every heart beneath the poles. It is wider than the catholic church, and it is masterful, lawless, and intrusive within it. We are all living in it, breathing it, acting under its influence, being cheated by its appearances, and unwarily admitting its principles.' Let young ministers who wish to preach to their people on the World -- after studying what the Preacher, and the Savior, and John, and John Bunyan say about the World, -- still read Faber's powerful chapter in his Creator and Creature. Yes; Madam Bubble finds a home for herself in every heart beneath the poles. The truth is Madam Bubble has no home, as she has no existence, but in human hearts. And all that Solomon, and our Savior, and John, and John Bunyan, and Frederick Faber say about the world and about Madam Bubble they really say about the heart of man. It is we, you and I, my brethren, who so highly commend the rich. It is we ourselves here who speak well from house to house of him whose father or whose self has been cunning to get money. We either speak well or ill of them. We either are sick with envy at them, or we fawn upon them and fall down before them. How men rise in our esteem in the degree that their money increases! With what reverence and holy awe we look up at them as if they were gods and the sons of gods! They become more than mortal men to our reverent imaginations. How happy, how all but blessed they must be! we say to ourselves. Within those park gates, under those high towers, in that silver-mounted carriage, surrounded with all those liveried servants, and loved and honored by all those arriving and leaving guests -- what happiness that rich man must have! We are either eaten up of lean-eyed envy of this and that rich man, or we positively worship them as other men worship God and His saints. Yes; Madam Bubble is our very mother. She conceived us and she suckled us. We were brought up in her nurture and admonition. We learned her Catechism, and her shrine is in our heart tonight. Like her, if only a pilgrim is poor, we scorn him. We will not know him. But if there be any one, pilgrim or no, cunning to get money, we honor him, and we claim him as our kindred and relation, our acquaintance and our friend. We will speak often of him as such from house to house. Just see if we will not. There is room in our hearts, Madam Bubble, there is room in our hearts for thee!

5. 'She loves them most that think best of her.' But, surely, surely, the guide goes quite too far in blaming and being hard upon poor madam Bubble for that? For, to give her fair play, she is not at all alone in that. Is the guide himself wholly above that? Do we not all do that? Is there one in ten, is there one in a thousand, who hates and humiliates himself because his love of men and women goes up or down just as they think of him? Yes; Great-heart is true to his great name in his whole portrait of Madam Bubble also, and nowhere more true than in this present feature. For when any man comes to have any true greatness in his heart -- how he despises and detests himself as he finds himself out in not only claiming kindred and acquaintance with the rich and despising and denying the poor; but, still more, in loving or hating other men just as they love or

hate him! The world loves her own. Yes; but he who has been taken out of the world, and who has had the world taken out of him, he loves -- he strives to love, he goes to his knees every day he lives to love -- those who not only do not think well of him, but who both think ill of him and speak ill of him. 'Humility,' says William Law, 'does not consist in having a worse opinion of ourselves than we deserve, or in abasing ourselves lower than we really are. But as all virtue is founded in truth, so humility is founded in a true and just sense of our weakness, misery, and sin. He who rightly feels and lives in this sense of his condition lives in humility. And, it may be added, when our hearts are wholly clothed with humility we shall be prompt to approve the judgment and to endorse the sentence of those who think and speak the least good of us and the most evil.'

6. 'Twas she,' so the guide at last wound up, 'that set Absalom against his father, and Jeroboam against his master. 'Twas she that persuaded Judas to sell his Lord, and that prevailed with Demas to forsake the godly pilgrim's life. None can tell all the mischief that Madam Bubble does. She makes variance between rulers and subjects, between parents and children, 'twixt neighbor and neighbor, 'twixt a man and his wife, 'twixt a man and himself, 'twixt the flesh and the heart.' Now, I shall leave that last indictment and its lessons and its applications to yourselves, my brethren. You will get far more good out of this accumulated count against Madam Bubble if you explain it, and open it up, and prove it, and illustrate it to yourselves. Explain, then, in what way this sorceress set Absalom against his father and Jeroboam against his master. Point out in what way she makes variance between a ruler and his subjects, and give illustrations. Put your finger on a parent and on a child between whom there is variance at this moment on her account. And, if you are that parent or the child, what have you done to remove that variance? Name two neighbors that to your knowledge Madam Bubble has come between; and say what you have done to be a peacemaker there. Set down what you would say to a man and his wife so as to put them on their guard against Madam Bubble ever coming in between them. And, last and best of all, point out to yourself at what times and in what ways this wicked witch tries to make variance between God's Holy Spirit striving within you and your own evil heart still strong within you. When you are weary and sleepy and hungry as a howlet, and Madam Bubble and her three daughters make a ring round you, what do you do? Do you ever take to your knees? Really and honestly, do you? When you find yourself out looking with holy fear on a rich and lofty relation, and with insufferable contempt on a poor and intrusive relation, by what name do you call yourself? Write it down. And when she would fain put variance between you and those who do not think well of you, what steps do you take to foil her? Where and how do you get strength at that supreme moment to think of others as you would have them think of you? 'Oh,' said Standfast, 'what a mercy it is that I did resist her! for to what might she not have drawn me?'

"John Gordon of Rusco - Remember These Seven Things"

Alexander Whyte,
Samuel Rutherford and
Some of his Correspondents,
Oliphant Anderson and Ferrier,
Edinburgh., 1894: pp. 113-122

There were plenty of cold Covenanters, as they were called, in Kirkeudbright in John Gordon's day, but the laird of Rosco was not one of them. Rusco Castle was too near Anwoth Kirk and Anwoth Manse, and its owner had had Samuel Rutherford too long for his minister and his near neighbor to make it possible for him to be "ane cold covenanter quha did not do his dewtie in everything committed to his charge thankfullie and willinglie." We find Gordon of Rusco giving good reasons indeed, as he thought, why he should not be sent out of the Stewartry on the service of the covenant, but the war committee "expelled his reasons" and instantly commanded his services. And from all we can gather out of the old Minute book, Rusco played all the noble part that Rutherford expected of him in the making of Scotland and in the salvation of her kirk.

Like the Psalmist in the hundred and second Psalm, we take pleasure in the stones of Rusco Castle, and we feel a favor to the very dust thereof. Even in Rutherford's day that rugged old pile was sacred and beautiful to the eyes of Rutherford and his people, because of what the grace of God had wrought within its walls; and, both for that, and for much more like that, both in Rutherford's own day and after it, we also look with awe and with desire at the ruined old mansion-house. A hundred years before John Gordon bade Rusco farewell for heaven, we find a friend of John Knox's on his deathbed there, and having a departure from his deathbed administered to him there as confident and as full of a desire to depart as John Knox's own. "The Last and Heavenly Speeches of John, Viscount Kenmure" also still echo through the deserted rooms of Rusco, and after he had gone up from it we find still another Gordon there with his wife and children and farm-tenants, all warm Covenanters, and all continuing the Rusco tradition of godliness and virtue. At the same time Samuel Rutherford was not the man to take it for granted that John Gordon and his household were all saved and home in heaven because they lived within such sacred walls and were all church members and warm Covenanters. He was only the more anxious about the Gordon family because they had such an ancestry and were all bidding so fair to leave behind them such a posterity. And thus it is that, from his isle of Patmos, Samuel Rutherford, like the apostle John to his seven churches, sends to John Gordon seven things that are specially to be remembered and laid to heart by the laird of Rusco.

1. Remember, in the first place, my dear brother, those most solemn and too much forgotten words of our Lord, that there are but few that be saved. It that really so? said a liberal-minded listener to our Lord one day. Is that really so, that there are but few that be saved? Mind your own business, was our Lord's answer. For there are many lost by making their own and other men's salvation a matter of dialectic and debate in the study and in the workshop rather than of

silence, and godly fear, and holy life. Yes, there are few that be saved, said Samuel Rutherford, writing again the same year to Farmer Henderson, who occupied the home-steading of Rusco. Men go to heaven in ones and twos. And that you may go there, even if it has to be alone, love your enemies and stand to the truth I taught you. Fear no man, fear God only. Seek Christ every day. You will find Him alone in the fields of Rusco. Seek a broken heart for sin, for, otherwise, you may seek Him all your days, but you will never find Him. And it is not in our New Testament only, and in such books as Rutherford's Letters only, that we are reminded of the loneliness of our road to heaven; in a hundred places in the wisest and deepest books of the heathen world we read the same warning; notably in the Greek Tablet of Cebes, which reads almost as if it had been cut out of the Sermon on the Mount. "Do you not see," says the old man, "a little door, and beyond the door a way which is not much crowded, for very few are going along it, it is so difficult of access, so rough, and so stony?" "Yes," answers the stranger. "And does there not seem," subjoins the old man, "to be a high hill and the road up it very narrow, with precipices on each side? Well, that is the way that leads to the true instruction." "A cause is not good," says Rutherford in another of his pungent books, "because it is followed by many. Men come to Zion in ones and twos out of a whole tribe, but they go to hell in their thousands. The way to heaven is overgrown with grass; there are the traces of but few feet on that way, only you may see here and there on it the footprints of Christ's bloody feet to let you know that you are not gone wrong but are still on the right way."

2. Remember also that other word of our Lord, -- that heaven is like a fortress in this, that it must be taken by force. Only our Lord means that the force must not be done to the gates or the walls of heaven, but to our own hard hearts and evil lives, "I find it hard to be a Christian," writes Rutherford to Rusco. "There is no little thrusting and thringing to get in at heaven's gates. Heaven is a strong castle that has to be taken by force." "Oh to have one day more in my pulpit in Aberdeen!" cried a great preacher of that day when he was dying. "What would you do?" asked another minister who sat at his bedside. "I would preach to the people the difficulty of salvation," said the dying man. "Remember," wrote Rutherford to Rusco from the same city, "Remember that it is violent sweating and striving that alone taketh heaven."

3. Remember also that there are many who start well at the bottom of the hill who never get to the top. We ministers and elders know that only too well; we do not need to be reminded of that. There are the names of scores and scores of young communicants on our session books of whom we well remember how we boasted about them when they took the foot of the hill, but we never mention their names now, or only with a blush and in a whisper. Some take to the hill-foot at one age, and some at another; some for one reason and some for another. A bereavement awakens one, a sickness -- their own or that of some one dear to them -- another; a disappointment in love or in business will sometimes do it; a fall into sin will also do it; a good book, a good sermon, a conversation with a friend who has been some way up the hill; many things may be made use of to make men and women, and young men and women, take a start toward a better life and a better world. But for ten, for twenty, who so start not two ever come to the top. "Heaven is not next door," writes Rutherford to Rusco; if it were we would all be saved." There was a well-known kind of Christians in Rutherford's day that the English Puritans called by the nick-name of

Temporaries; and it is to pluck Rusco from among them that Rutherford writes to him this admonitory letter. And there is an equally well-known type of Christian in our day, though I do not know that any one has so happily nick-named him as yet.

"The Scriptures beguiled the Pharisees," writes Rutherford; and the Christian I refer to is self-beguiled with the very best things in the Scriptures. The cross is always in his mouth, but you will never find it on his back. He has got, at least in language, as far as the cross, but he remains there. He says the burden is off his back, and he takes care that he shall keep out of that kind of life that would put it on again. He has been once pardoned, and he takes his stand upon that. He strove hard till he was converted, and he sometimes strives hard to get other men brought to the same conversion. But his conversion has been all exhausted in the mere etymology of the act, for he has only turned round in his religious life, he has not made one single step of progress. But let one of the greatest masters of true religion that ever taught the Church of Christ speak to us on the subject of this gin-horse Christian, "The Scriptures," says Jonathan Edwards, "everywhere represent the seeking, the striving, and the labor of a Christian as being chiefly to be gone through after his conversion, and his conversion as being but the beginning of the work. And almost all that is said in the New Testament of men's watching, giving earnest heed to themselves, running the race that is set before them, striving and agonizing, pressing forward, reaching forth, crying to God night and day; I say, almost all that is said in the New Testament of these things is spoken of and is directed to God's saints. Where these things are applied once to sinners seeking salvation, they are spoken of the saint's prosecution of their high calling ten times. But many have got in these days into a strange anti-scriptural way of having all their striving and wrestling over before they are converted, and so having an easy time of it afterwards."

4. Remember, also, wrote Rutherford, to look up the Scriptures and read and lay to heart the lessons of Esau's life and Judas's, of the life of Balaam, and Saul, and Pharaoh, and Simon Magus, and Caiaphas, and Ahab, and Jehu, and Herod, and the man in Matthew 8:19, and the apostates in Hebrews 6. For all these were at best but watered brass and reprobate silver. "One day," writes Mrs. William Veitch of Dumfries in her autobiography, "having been at prayer, and coming into the room where one was reading a letter of Mr. Rutherford's directed to one John Gordon of Rusco -- giving an account of how far one might go and yet prove a hypocrite and miss heaven -- it occasioned great exercise in me." Dr. Andrew Bonar is no doubt entirely right when he says that this letter, now open before us, must have been the heart-searching letter that caused that God-fearing woman, fresh from her knees, so great exercise. Let us share her great exercise, and in due time we shall share her great salvation. Not otherwise.

5. "And remember," he proceeds, "what your besetting sin may cost you in the end. I beseech you therefore and obtest you in the Lord, to make conscience of all rash and passionate oaths, of raging and avenging anger, of night-drinking, of bad company, of Sabbath-breaking, of hurting any under you by word or deed, of hurting your very enemies. Except you receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, you cannot enter it. That is a word that should make your great spirit fall." "If men allow themselves in malice and envy," writes Thomas Shepard, a contemporary of Rutherford's, "or in wanton thoughts, that will condemn them, even though their corruptions do

not break out in any scandalous way. Such thoughts are quite sufficient evidence of a rotten heart. If a man allows himself in malice or in envy, though he thinks he does it not, yet he is a hypocrite; if in his heart he allows it he cannot be a saint of God. If there be one evil way, though there have been many reformations, the man is an ungodly man. One way of sin is exception enough against any man's salvation. A small shot will kill a man as well as a large bullet; a small leak let alone will sink a ship, and a small, and especially a secret and spiritual sin, will cost a man his soul."

6. "Remember, also, your shortening sand-glass." On the day when John Gordon was born a sand-glass with his name written upon it was filled, and from that moment it began to run down before God in heaven. For how long it was filled God who filled it alone knew. Whether it was filled to run out in an hour, or to run till Gordon was cut down in mid-time of his days, or till he had attained to his three-score years and ten, or whether it was to run on to the labor and sorrow of four-score years, not even his guardian angel knew, but God only. And then beside that sand-glass a leaf, taken out of the seven-sealed book, was laid open, on the top of which was found written the as yet unbaptized name of this new-born child. And under his name was found written all that John Gordon was appointed and expected to do while his sand-glass was still running. His opening life as child and boy and man in Galloway; his entrance on Rusco; his friendship with Samuel Rutherford; his duties to his family, to his tenants, to his Church, and to the Scottish Covenant; the inward life he was commanded and expected to live alone with God; the seven things he was every day to remember; the evangelical graces of heart and life and character he was to be told and to be enabled to put on; the death he was to die, and the "freehold" he was after all these things to enter on in heaven. And it is of that sand-glass that was at that moment running so fast and so low within the veil that Rutherford writes so often and so earnestly to the so-forgetful laird of Rusco. And how solemnizing it is, if anything would solemnize our hard hearts, that we all have a sand-glass standing before God with our names written upon it, and that it is running out before God day and night unceasingly. We shall all be too suddenly solemnized when the last grain of our measured-out sand has dropped down, and the blind Fury will come, and without pity and without remorse will slit our thin-spun life with her abhorred shears. And that whether our life-work is finished or no, half-finished or no, or to even begun. The night cometh, and the shears with it, when no man can work. Our family must then be left behind us, however they have been brought up; our farm also, however it has been worked; our estate also, however it has been managed; our pulpit, our pew, our church, our character, and even our salvation, and we must, all alone with God, face and account for the empty sand-glass and the accusing book. It is any wonder that John Gordon's minister, when he was in the spirit in Patmos, should write him as we here read? What kind of a minister would he have been, and what a sand-glass, and what a book of angry account he would have had soon to face himself, if he had let all his people in Anwoth live on and suddenly die in total forgetfulness of the sand and the shears, the book of duty and the book of judgment. "Remember," Rutherford wrote, "remember and misspend not your short sand-glass, for your forenoon is already spent, your afternoon has come and your night will be on you when you will not see to work. Let your heart, therefore, be set upon finishing your journey and summing up and laying out the accounts of your life and the grounds of your death alone before God."

7. And, above all, remember that after you have done all, it is the blood of Christ alone that will set you down safely as a freeholder in Heaven. But His blood, and your everyday remembrance of His blood, and your everyday obligation to it, will surely set you, John Gordon of Rusco on earth, so down a freeholder in heaven.

"Soon shall the cup of glory
Wash down earth's bitterest woes,
Soon shall the desert briar
Break into Eden's Rose:
I stand upon His merit,
I know no other stand,
Not e'en where glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land."

"My Whole Life is a Continual Conversion"

Alexander Whyte,

James Fraser Laird of Brea Parish Minister of Culross Bass Rock, Blackness, and New Gate Prisoner and Author of *The Book of the Intricacies of my Heart and Life*, Oliphant Anderson and Ferrier, Edinburgh., pp. 40-46

My old and honored friend Dr. Elder Cumming of Glasgow, in his admirable appreciation of Fraser expresses his regret that Fraser so often uses the word "conversion" concerning his whole Christian life. But after giving the fullest consideration to what that deeply experienced and deservedly eminent evangelical preacher says concerning Fraser's frequent use of the word "conversion," I cannot share with him in that criticism and complaint of his. For so far as I understand Fraser he employs that experimental and autobiographical word in much the same sense in which your Lord employs it when he is instructing His disciples concerning the inwardness and the depth and the intricacy and the unceasing progress of the spiritual life in their souls. Our Lord must have startled His already converted disciples, and he must have made the dullest-minded of them to ponder and to think, when, seeing their pride and their ambition and their jealousy and their envy of one another, He called a little child unto Him, and said to them, "Except ye be converted, and become as the little child, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." And after Peter had been three years called and converted and had been all that time under the continual tuition of his Master, warning that proud disciple of his coming fall, his Master said to him, "When thou art converted from thy coming fall and art truly penitent for it and art forgiven it, then strengthen thy brethren in all their similar trials and temptations and falls." Now it is in that experimental and autobiographical and vivid sense that James Fraser employs this word "conversion" so often concerning himself. And it is in that same experimental sense that I shall now employ it when I proceed to speak to you for a little concerning Fraser and concerning yourselves.

"A Christian man's whole life," says our author in his fifth chapter, "is but a continual conversion. And the Lord after every time of backsliding draws our souls back again to Himself very much in the same way as at our first conversion. Yea, He deals with us sometimes as if we had never been converted before. "For my self," he says, "I have found a far deeper and a far more distinct law-work in my after convictions of sin than ever I felt at my first conviction. I was converted that communion week in Edinburgh as with a clap. But now the Lord draws me back and back to himself step by step, so that I am better and better prepared for Christ before every time of my renewed returns to Him." Do you follow that, my friends? Do you take Fraser up? You have had that same experience yourselves, have you not? Your law-work, as Paul experienced it and then wrote to the Romans about it, and as Fraser experienced it and now writes to you about it, your own law-work is a thousand times more deep and deadly in your after life than ever it was or could be at your first conviction and conversion. With most converts in their first experiences their law-work is but skin deep, so to speak. But the awful spirituality

of God's holy law is all experienced more and more as the soul attains to a true spirituality itself. As Fraser says, "It is only after we have come to know Christ better, and better, and ever better; it is only then that we come back to Him with more and more conviction of our utter and everlasting hopelessness but for Him, and but for His all-sufficient salvation." Just so. No young convert, the very best, as yet knows much of himself. Paul did not. Luther, our second Paul, did not. Fraser, our second Luther, did not. No man ever did at first. The unsounded depth of our own depravity, the bottomless pit of sin and misery that is in us all -- that takes a long lifetime for its full discovery. Indeed it is never fully discovered to us in this life -- else we would go mad at the sight of it. The Holy Spirit has many awful things to show His subjects about themselves, but they are not able to bear all those awful things as yet; no more than a little child is able to bear all that lies wrapped up in its own soul against its threescore and ten years to come. "But now," says the minister of Culross as he began to grow toward his threescore and ten years in the spiritual life, "but now the Lord insists on my seeing every step of my returns to Him. So that all the early knowledge I had of myself and of Him now seems to me to be as no knowledge at all compared with what I have now."

Again, and further on in my pursuit of this intricate man, I find this: "The whole subsequent life of a truly Christian man is one continual conversion, in which he is perpetually humbled under an awful and an unbearable sense of his own incurable sinfulness." That is to say, he is perpetually cast down in his own soul; he is perpetually degraded in his own eyes; he is perpetually disgusted at himself; he is perpetually horrified at himself. In reading Sir John Coleridge's beautiful biography of John Keble the other day I came on an exact case of this same experience. John Keble was perpetually humbled under his own inward and unconquerable sinfulness, till he could not keep his humiliation out of his Christian Year, nor out of his private letters to such intimate friends as his future biographer. But Sir John cannot comprehend Keble. He had never had that perpetual humiliation himself, and able and good man as Sir John was, his shamefaced apologies for his friend and his exculpatory explanations of his too strong language all make me smile at his babe-like innocence. I wonder what Sir John would have said about James Fraser if Dean Ramsay, or some other of his Edinburgh correspondents, had been bold enough to send him a birthday gift of our intricate and perpetually humbled autobiography. Alexander the Great always had his camp-bed made with Homer under his pillow because of the incomparable battle-pieces in that book of battles. And Keble would have somehow found out James Fraser, and would have kept him under his pillow, had the Laird of Brea been in the Church of England, or been in the Church of Rome. But Scotland was "Samaria" to Keble and to all the other Tractarians of those days. All the same, I know more than one old covert in Scotland who read that intricate book with their midnight lamp, and who find a true companionship in such frequent passages as these: "I am perpetually humbled under the experience of my own sinfulness; till I creep nearer and nearer to God in Christ, and with more and more fervent faith and love every day and every night. And till I am drawn continually to walk closer and closer with Christ, endeavoring after His likeness in all my walk and conversation."

In spite of Sir John Coleridge, and all such innocent and easily sanctified men, the Laird of Brea keeps on returning and returning to his deadly need of a more and more radical and more and more

root-and-branch conversion all his days. "I have been searching," he says, "into the Lord's ends with all this in my case. And I have come to this conclusion in this matter. I think He has taken these ways with me so that I might know something of the unspeakable plague of my own heart, and that I might be more and more humbled because of my continual departing from God. Also this I think has been one of His ends with me: that I might be the better acquainted with His various processes and methods and His different styles of conversion, with which through my own somewhat hasty incoming I was not at that time so well acquainted. God does now, as it were, act my conversion over and over again. He convinces me more and more, not only of my actual and my open sins, but still more now of my secret and my soul-sins, of the plague of my own heart, and of that fountain-sin of my very nature, which carries me away from my God and from His holiness continually. He convinces me also that this is a matter in which I cannot really help myself, or redeem myself, or in any way cure myself, do all I can. And all that, till I am shut up to believe, and to trust, and to live in and on Christ as never before. And then in all that, that I might be the better able to guide and to direct such of His people as He is pleased to put under my charge at Culross or else where."

Now, speaking of Culross, what do you think? For my part, I cannot but think that it was by far their greatest blessing in this world to the people of Culross to have the Laird of Brea for their parish minister: that so difficult to convert and so intricate-minded man. And I think I know some of yourselves who would willingly have walked across the whole peninsula of Fife to have spent the week-end at Culross. We are told that Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood which the carpenters of Jerusalem had made for the purpose, and he read in the Book of the Law distinctly, and gave the sense, and made the people to understand the reading. And exactly like that was the Laird of Brea in his pulpit of wood at Culross. He made his parishioners to understand the law of God through the law-work that was first in their minister's own heart, and then through all that in their own hearts. So much so, that all the people in that favored parish who were already converted, and all those who collected into the parish kirk every Sabbath-day seeking conversion, would almost worship James Fraser as the people of Anwoth were already almost worshipping Samuel Rutherford. For on every returning Sabbath-day Fraser went up into his pulpit of wood and gave out such psalms and such paraphrases and selected such Scriptures and so drew out their deepest sense as to throw a divine light on the hearts of all his spiritually-minded people; till, like his favorite divine Thomas Shepard of New England, Fraser would never have a Sabbath on which both he and his like-minded kirk-session did not expect some young converts to be added to the church, and some old backsliders to be restored to it. Now, may this pulpit of wood in which I now stand be like the pulpit of Ezra in Jerusalem and like the pulpit of Fraser in Culross! And may I and my colleague be your Ezra and your Fraser? And all that first to our own true and intricate and repeated and completed conversion! And then to the same completed conversion in you all! And all to the glory of God both in us and in you! Amen.