

Hebrews - Commentaries by Walter Biggar Scott

Two Trees of Paradise: God's Grace And Man's Responsibility, Science and Scripture. (11:3)

Science has furnished us with numerous facts, and when she confines herself to her proper domain, which is to examine existing phenomena and generalize under a uniform law, she may be accepted and her teachings valued for their real worth, only, be it remembered that science cannot meet the soul's need in the presence of God, or settle any moral question whatever; and, further, that the facts and laws of creation were there before science discovered them. Man is himself the subject of creative power and wisdom. He did not behold the Creator at His work. Angels cannot inform us how things and persons were produced, for they, too; are the handy work of God. To whom; then, can we turn for certain information as to creation? Why, to the Creator only. But now that we have to do with God, the mightiest intellect must be laid low in the divine presence, as a tribute to the infinite ways of Him who is unsearchable. He speaks, and we reverently hear, "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God" (Heb. 11:3). Physiology declares that man is mortal, so does Scripture and every-day experience; but when the physiologist reasons from the present fact of man's mortality (of course true as to the body only), that therefore he was always so, we reject the thought, and affirm, on divine authority, that mortality is a consequence of sin, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Physiology can speak of man as he is, but herein consists the value of the Word of God—and, O beloved reader! it is a treasure too precious to be lightly parted with—that it sheds divine light upon man's past, present, and future. Nor does the fact, if such it be, that death among animals and plants was the rule previous to the earth being prepared as a home for man, prove that therefore man was created mortal. How can it prove anything of the kind? One would naturally think that the reverse would have been the conclusion arrived at, for man was created a moral being, not so the animals and plants. Many pious persons whose reverence for the Word of God is worthy of all praise, are either distressed at the alleged discovery by the scientist of life and death previous to the six thousand years of man's history on earth, or they are driven to deny in toto the evidence of geology on this point as contradicting, in their opinion, the Word of God, which is supposed to teach that death upon all living creatures was the result of Adam's disobedience to God. But the Scriptures do not teach that the lower and inferior creation became subject to death through the sin of its moral and responsible head; moreover, they speak only of death in this world, and intimate nothing as to life and death amongst animals and inferior orders of creation generally, during the unknown and uncountable pre-Adamic times. Rom. 5:12 refers to death in the human race and as the result of man's sin; while Rom. 8:20 shows that the whole system over which man was set as head and moral link between it and God was subjected to "vanity" or "ruin;" it does not say death,

Counsels to Young Christians, Counsels to Young Christians (1:3)

Doubting Your Salvation?

Do you have doubts about your salvation? Is there an uneasy feeling in your soul, a doubt in your heart, an uncertainty in your conscience? If so, you are not perfectly clear as to your acceptance by God.

Now, in order to have peace about your salvation, you must turn from your feelings to the cross. At the cross you will learn the lesson of what God has done through the Lord Jesus to put away your sins. He is satisfied with His work; He wants you to be satisfied as well.

God has made three statements about the work of His Son on the cross. If you believe them, they will remove all your doubts.

First, "When He [the Son of God] had by Himself purged our sins, [He] sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Hebrews 1:3). The purging — the removal of the guilt — of our sins was for God's glory. It was a work of God to create the worlds; it was just as truly a work of God to purge our sins. He did the work, it is done, finished, complete. Why doubt or question it? You may fear and tremble, but why? God in Christ did the work, not you. He satisfied Himself that it was done properly. Now the Son of God, the mighty One who, in love, bore the punishment for our sins on the cross and there removed our guilt from before the face of God, has gone to heaven to sit at the right hand of God in the place of honor. God is satisfied. Are you?

Second, "The worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins" (Hebrews 10:2). Now, through faith in the testimony of God, every believer — young or old, weak or strong — is "once purged." His guilt is once and forever removed through the work of the cross. But once the guilt before God is removed — purged — then the believer is not conscious any more of sins — the internal consciousness of the guilt is removed as well. This is an act within, as the purging was an act without. Both have present and eternal value, never to be repeated.

Before salvation you had and were conscious of unforgiven sins standing between you and God. Your sins purged once by Christ and your conscience purged once by faith are enough! God's eye on the blood for your security and His Word in your heart for confidence are lessons of priceless value with which to begin your Christian life. Being "once purged" and having "no more conscience of sins" are enough to dispel every doubt and set the most troubled heart at perfect rest.

Third, "By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14). The one glorious sacrifice of Christ is of infinite value to God. It rightly enables Him to bring even the weakest believer into His presence as PERFECTED FOREVER. God says you are perfected forever, not because of the amount of your faith or service or walk, but simply and absolutely because of the infinite value to Him of the one offering of Christ for your sins. It is "by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified," and every believer is sanctified — set apart for God.

Being perfected does not mean that the believer will live a sinless life. God dealt once and forever with sin and the guilt of the sinner through the sacrifice of His Son at the cross. Now, in all the worth of that one sacrifice, God can view every believer “perfected for ever” — perfected for His presence — made fit to stand before His throne in peace.

These three passages form a rock on which to rest your soul and conscience, and on which you will be safe from every wave of unbelief. Grip God’s Word; get anchored on the rock of imperishable Scripture; all then will be well.

When you were born, you were born with a nature that wants to please itself more than it wants to please God or anyone else; it is selfish. Now when you were saved, this old nature, which you were born with, was not removed. But when you believed and were saved, God gave you a new nature that wants to please Him and others rather than yourself. So in every Christian there are two natures, the old and the new. The old is condemned, and it only opposes God (Romans 6; 8:3, 7, 8). The new is holy, and it delights in God (Romans 7:22; Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10).

Now these two natures in the believer oppose each other — the old wanting to please itself and the new wanting to please God. In Romans 7 we see these two natures in conflict with each other in a man. Every believer experiences this conflict at some time, but God doesn’t intend us to go through this life in the condition of conflict described in Romans 7.

In Romans 8 God teaches us how we are delivered from the condition experienced in chapter 7. Chapter 8 teaches us that when we are saved, not only do we receive a new nature, but also God sends the Holy Spirit to dwell in us. The Holy Spirit is the only power to repress the workings of the flesh — that old sinful nature within us (Galatians 5:17). The new sinless nature, while holy in its tendencies and desires, is weak and powerless apart from the action of the Holy Spirit. It wills to do right but lacks the power to accomplish it — the Holy Spirit is that power. How very important for us to be clear on these truths — they are vital and affect every aspect of our daily Christian lives.

We can make no rule about entertainment. The buoyancy of youth demands a certain amount of liberty which, if kept under godly limits and controlled by godly principles, is all right. For my own part, I have no desire to visit exhibitions and other shows, not on the ground that these amusements are sinful, but simply because I am satisfied without them. Christ and His interests are enough. Besides, souls are perishing and eternity is nearing, and I have neither time nor inclination to mingle with the world in admiring its toys and sharing in its pleasures.

The youngest believer does not need to look to the world to provide something to give him pleasure and satisfaction. He has in himself a well of living water — ever sparkling and springing up for his soul’s enjoyment (John 4:14). “Never thirst” and “never hunger” is the twofold description of every child of God. Being occupied with the Lord Jesus and His things gives a joy and satisfaction the world can neither give nor understand.

Instead of the world ministering to our enjoyment, we minister to its need. “He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water” (John 7:38). Let the rivers flow, and thus let us serve our generation.

There are, however, many games and amusements of an entirely innocent character which we may freely enjoy without joining with the world. I am not too old to heartily enter into and thoroughly enjoy recreation with young people. Our homes should be bright, happy and attractive.

Pray at all times, and under all circumstances. By prayer we express our dependence on God. Neglect of private prayer is the certain path to a complete breakdown in one’s Christian life. I have followed the course of many Christians. I have marked the progress and success of some, and mourned over the failure of others. To a large extent, these results closely matched the use or neglect of private prayer (Matthew 6:6).

The beginning of the Lord’s personal ministry was marked by prayer (Luke 3:21). The ministry of the twelve was preceded by a night of prayer (Luke 6:12). The mighty work of God in Europe may be traced to a prayer meeting at the side of a river (Acts 16:13). Elijah prayed earnestly that it wouldn’t rain and there was no rain for three and one-half years. He prayed again for rain and it rained (James 5:17). The conversion of 3000 souls followed a ten-day prayer meeting (Acts 1 and 2).

A man of prayer may accomplish mighty results; while the prayerless servant, however gifted, is powerless and weak. A man of prayer has tremendous power. In himself he is weak and defenseless, but by prayer he calls on and counts on the resources of almighty God.

Begin and end each day with God in prayer. Speak to Him often. Speak to Him under all circumstances. If you have sinned, confess it to Him immediately, never wait. Make God your daily friend and be sure to tell Him everything that happens — your joys and your sorrows.

Whatever you may have to set aside for lack of time, never neglect personal prayer. If necessary, cut back on your schedule of activities, but not your private time with the Lord in reading and prayer.

The more you give yourself to prayer and the study of God’s Word, the more your life and service will have a corresponding character stamped on them. Men and women who are characterized by “one thing I do” are in great demand: they are people of purpose.

When we get to heaven, the Lord is going to review our lives with us (1 Corinthians 3:13). Much that we regarded as Christian work may “be burned,” and we as a workman shall “suffer loss” (verse 15). It will not be the amount but the character of the service that will be in question in the evaluation of works. “Well done, thou good and faithful servant” shall be the Lord’s word of welcome then (Matthew 25:21). Work — much or little — characterized by prayer and performed according to the Lord’s mind should be the aim of each one of us.

Character is formed, to a great extent, by what we read and hear and see. The artificial culture of the day destroys depth and force of character. Today’s entertainment and light literature are forming a superficial race of men and women. The present is a rare opportunity for individual character to shine and leave its mark. Indiscriminate reading, listening and viewing to while away free time are ruinous to the mind. Thoughts pour in and run out, at best leaving no lasting impression — what a waste of time and of mind!

As to choice of books, there can be no fixed rule to apply. History is always instructive. Science is dangerous when it is the product of unsanctified minds. Novels and other works of fiction which diminish our appetite for reading the Word of God are harmful and should not be read. Never read valueless books. Shun literature that is frivolous in character. Worse still, avoid that which directly or covertly denies the absolute inspiration and supreme authority of the sacred Scriptures.

Beware! The communication media of the day form the mind and character. Immoral and violent TV, radio, movies and literature wreck morals.

Make the Bible your daily companion. Your interest in it will grow the more you read and study it. It is the sufficiency of the man of God (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). Have the Bible constantly beside you, in your pocket, or at hand for constant reference. Draw your doctrines from it and not from a human work of literature or drama.

The Bible will strengthen and guide you. It will support and cheer you in a lonely hour. It will impress certainty on your life and actions. As you study the Book of books, it will guide you in the worship of your God and in the intelligent service of your Lord.

I would strongly advise a systematic study of the Bible. The young man Timothy was told: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed" (2 Timothy 2:15). Writing short studies of Scripture is a great help to progress and exactness of thought. A good concordance is invaluable.

Select only decided Christians to be your friends. Be sure your companions are strongly on the Lord's side. A man is known by the company he keeps. Stay clear of people with loose opinions and lax morals. Your companions will influence you either for good or for evil.

Spend time with spiritual and godly people. "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name" (Malachi 3:16). Regular fellowship of this character has the Lord's commendation.

My earnest desire is that you grow up to be a man or a woman whose moral influence on your generation will be felt — an influence which will stamp its own character on souls for eternity, for influence — good or bad — never dies. The stamp of eternity is on each of us, whether we realize it or not.

Meet as often as possible with your friends and companions for prayer, and converse with them about the Lord's things and His interests. This will be a means of strength. The Lord has instituted Christian fellowship as an important help to our spiritual growth and blessing (Jude 20, 21). But I would again emphasize the statement: Choose companions who are decidedly for Christ.

I want to warn Christian young men against the sin of trifling with the feelings and affections of those of the other sex. Be manly and straightforward, and do not be cruel deceivers. God observes your actions and words. I have no desire to say more on this delicate subject than this: Do not be general lovers. Be careful in the choice of a companion whom you mean to make your wife, and be true and constant to her in your love — to her only.

I greatly desire the growth of the young sisters in spiritual life and in devotedness to Christ. Absolutely refuse all mere human attachments. Repulse every attempt; yea, reject the very thought of a lifelong companionship with one not distinctly on the Lord's side. Do not be deceived on this point under any pleas whatever. "Them that honor Me I will honor." My earnest prayer is that the Lord will guide the feet of each young believer in Christ.

Please study carefully the first epistle to Timothy and the epistle to Titus. They contain instruction and advice of great importance for young believers. I want you to shine as the Lord's lights wherever He puts you, adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things (Titus 2:10).

First, "show piety at home." Disobedience to parents or guardians and a lack of respect for elders are marked features of this age. Be obedient and kind at home, and do not run out of the house every night if your parents desire your presence and help in the family circle. Remember, you are Christ's representative and witness at home, at school, at work — wherever you are. Your ways and behavior at home and elsewhere will be either a help or a hindrance.

Be modest and respectful. As to dress, be simple. Some put all their stock in show without substance — foolish young men and women! Do they really think that people cannot estimate them at their real value! So-called Christian young people seeking the approval of the world with popular dress, manners and habits only spoil their testimony for their Lord and bring discontent into their souls. You cannot serve both God and the god of this world. Christ is the great constraining power. When His love gets hold of our hearts in power, these things drop off.

In Ephesians 5:3-6 we have serious instructions about our Christian behavior and conversation. Making puns with the Word of God is a hateful and sinful habit. Slang expressions are most unbecoming in a Christian. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt (Colossians 4:6).

There is the boasting tongue — used by the proud. There is the lying tongue — used by the untruthful. There is the murmuring tongue — used by the discontented. There is the irreverent tongue — used by the sceptic.

Remarks and conversations of a light character weaken the mind and defile the conscience. "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips" prayed the Psalmist, and so may each of us, young and old. What we see, hear and read leave impressions on our hearts and memory which are never completely erased.

Idle chatter leads to gossip, and gossip leads to scandal. Oh, be careful and bridle your tongue! Check the outflow. If it is the product of the new nature in you, then let it flow spontaneously (James 1:26). Words from the lips of some are as a sword to hurt (Proverbs 12:18); from the lips of others they are as a honeycomb to give joy and health (Proverbs 16:24).

May you have a useful life. You will find your work at your fingertips. Do not trouble yourself about a distant sphere of service. Do what you can in the circumstances where God has placed you, and when you have done that, He may enlarge your sphere of labor — but only when you have served Him well in the smaller one.

“She hath done what she could” (Mark 14:8); higher commendation there could not be. May we each merit that! Throw your energies into whatever work the Lord gives you to do — “do it with thy might.” Be earnest and enthusiastic in every service, in every bit of work. See that your heart is as full of Christ as your hands are full of work.

Be holy and consistent in everyday life — that will preach a far more eloquent sermon, and a more practical one too, than the tongue can utter.

Do not turn aside or cease from the work of the Lord by the sneer, lack of approval, or criticism of others, even Christian friends. Profit by their advice, by all means, but solemnly remember that one is your master, even Christ, and to Him alone are you responsible as a servant. Not even the Apostle Paul could control the movements of another of the Lord’s servants (1 Corinthians 16:12). We must in service maintain our individual and direct responsibility to Christ as Lord.

You have no need to seek special opportunities of usefulness. They are all around you. Do good unto all men, especially fellow believers (Galatians 6:10). A distinct call to special service at home or abroad requires gift, grace and faith not common to all. Persons of marked gift will not readily fit into a narrow groove; they will find out their own sphere in time and their gift will make room for them (Proverbs 18:16).

Do not be proud of gift, nor of natural or acquired ability. When we have spent ourselves and done our best, we are still nothing more than unprofitable servants (Luke 17:10). There is not much credit in simply doing one’s duty, and the best servant cannot do more. Work on till the Master comes.

“Thou, O man of God ... follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith” (1 Timothy 6:11, 12).

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