

Devotional Refreshment

With Spurgeon and the Puritans

“At their best, Christians have saturated themselves in the Bible. They say with Job, ‘I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread’ (Job 23:12).” – D.A. Carson

I. Thinking About Devotional Life: Two Guardrails

A. “If I just do this, God will bless me!”

“Thus says the LORD: ‘Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest?’” (Is 66:1)

B. “Let’s not be too legalistic. Those free in Christ don’t do ‘quiet time’!”

“Seek the LORD while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; ⁷ let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” (Is 55:6-7)

“Grant unto us, O Lord, to be occupied in the mysteries of thy Heavenly wisdom, with true progress in piety, to thy glory and our own edification. Amen.” - John Calvin, at the beginning of his exegetical lectures on the Old Testament

II. The Prince of Preachers: Charles H. Spurgeon’s (1834-1892) *Morning and Evening*

July 10 – Evening Reading

“And the evening and the morning were the first day.” (Gen 1:5)

The evening was “darkness” and the morning was “light,” and yet *the two together are called by the name that is given to the light alone!* This is somewhat remarkable, but it has an exact analogy in spiritual experience. In every believer there is darkness and light, and yet he is not to be named a sinner because there is sin in him, but he is to be named a saint because he possesses some degree of holiness. This will be a most comforting thought to those who are mourning their infirmities, and who ask, “Can I be a child of God while there is so much darkness in me?” Yes; for you, like the day, take not your name from the evening, but from the morning; and you are spoken of in the word of God as if you were even now perfectly holy as you will be soon. You are called the child of light, though there is darkness in you still. You are named after what is the predominating quality in the sight of God, which will one day be the only principle remaining. Observe that *the evening comes first*. Naturally we are darkness first in order of time, and the gloom is often first in our mournful apprehension, driving us to cry out in deep humiliation, “God be merciful to me, a sinner.” The place of the morning is second, it dawns when grace overcomes nature. It is a blessed aphorism of John Bunyan, “That which is last, lasts forever.” That which is first, yields in due season to the last; but nothing comes after the last. So that though you are naturally darkness, when once you become light in the Lord, there is no evening to follow; “thy sun shall no more go down.” The first day in this life is an evening and a morning; but the second day, when we shall be with God, forever, shall be a day with no evening, but one, sacred, high, eternal noon.

I. What does Spurgeon mean in the first line that the first evening and morning in Gen 1:5 “are called by the name that is given to the light alone”? What spiritual analogy does he make to Christians?

2. How does Paul's opening to his letter to the Corinthians express Spurgeon's reality concerning Christians?

To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours...⁴ I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus,⁵ that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge—...so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ,⁸ who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor 1:2-8)

"Every time we look upon our congregations, let us believingly remember that they are the purchase of Christ's blood, and therefore should be regarded by us with the deepest interest and the most tender affection."

- Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor*, 137.

3. Consider the following passages of Scripture. What does the imagery of darkness and light communicate in each (Hint: they are not all exactly the same)?

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined. (Is 9:2)

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Cor 4:6)

Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' (Matt 22:13)

4. How do the previous texts explain Paul's exhortation to you in Ephesians 5 (related to a past reality, which is?) and I Thessalonians (related to a future reality, which is?)? What are practical ways we should obey these commands (see context!)

Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.⁷ Therefore do not become partners with them;⁸ for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light... (Eph 5:6-8)

For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night...But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief.⁵ For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness.⁶ So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.⁷ For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night.⁸ But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.⁹ For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,¹⁰ who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him. (1 Thess 5:2-10)

And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.²³ And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.²⁴ By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it,²⁵ and its gates will never be shut by day--and there will be no night there. (Rev 21:22-25)

Every time we look upon our congregations, let us believingly remember that they are the purchase of Christ's blood, and therefore should be regarded by us with the deepest interest and the most tender affection.