

"Peace I leave with You."

John xiv. 27.

O peace! thou gift of Heaven—thy dawning flingeth Gleams of bright sunshine o'er life's troubled wave; And to the weary, fainting mourner bring-eth Comfort and help his wounded soul to save. Peace, when the troubled waves of life swell highest, Peace, when the body sinks to earth's calm rest— In hope reposing—safe while thou art nighest, Then in thy blissful presence fully blest, O who may tell of Heaven's own peace the story? Fulness, fruition, glad, unmixed repose! A being fraught with blessedness—a glory Undimmed by change—untouched by earth's dark woes! Peace, 'twas the Saviour's parting, dying token. Peace be the entrance to our Home above! Heaven's hosts all echoing—"Peace and rest unbroken; Welcome, blest spirit, to the Land of Love." We hail Thy great bequest, Almighty Saviour! Bless the sweet messenger benignly given. Give us, O give us of Thine endless favour, To keep our Jubilee or Peace in Heaven!

Visitor Pulpit.

KNOWLEDGE, WORSHIP, GRATITUDE.

A Sermon by Rev. C. H. Spurgeon.

"So that they are without excuse: because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful."—Rom. 1: 20, 21.

The people mentioned by Paul in our text fell into two great evils, or rather into two forms of one great evil—atheism; the atheism of the heart, and the atheism of the life. They knew God, but they glorified him not as God, neither were they thankful.

We will first consider the first sin mentioned here, and then the second. I shall not look at these two evils as if you were Romans, but I shall adapt the text to your own case, and speak of these sins, as Englishmen are too apt to commit them. Thirdly, let us view the consequences, or what comes of men not glorifying God and not being thankful. Then, fourthly, let us fly from these sins immediately, God helping us. O Holy Spirit, help the preacher now, for all his help is in thee!

I. At once, then, let us look at this first sin, a sin very common in these days. They knew God, but they glorified him not as God. Even in old Rome, with all its darkness, there was some knowledge of God; how can the creature quite forget its Creator? Of course the people had not that spiritual knowledge which the Holy Ghost communicates to the renewed in heart, for the carnal mind cannot know God spiritually; its fleshly ideas cannot come near to his holy spirituality. But Paul means that they perceived the eternal power and Godhead of the Great Former of all things; and they might have perceived much more of his divine character and glory if their foolish hearts had not been darkened by their evil passions. When you go among the heathen, whether they are Pantheists or Polytheists, or whatever they may be, there is still a notion in the background of all their mythology of some one great superior being, elevated above those whom they call gods, some serenely just father, preserver, avenger, and rewarder of men.

Some among the heathen no doubt attained to a very considerable knowledge of God, or at least they walked upon the borders of marvellous discoveries of the Godhead. We are greatly surprised at the language of Socrates, and Plato, and Seneca, and others; such men have lately been held up as patterns; but if their lives are studied, they will be found to be sadly defaced with what Paul fitly calls "vile affections." These were wise men, but the world by wisdom knew not God; they were great thinkers, but a clear revelation of God was not in all their thoughts. They did not like to retain God in their knowledge, and so they remained steeped in loathsome vice which we dare not mention, for it is a shame even to speak of the things which were done of the most enlightened of them in secret. They had knowledge, but they forgot its responsibilities;

they knew God, but they glorified him not as God, neither were they thankful.

We may now let all the heathen go, for it is more true of us than it is of them, that we know God. We know God, but I am afraid that there are many thousands and millions of our fellow-creatures who glorify him not as God; let us see to it that we do not ourselves belong to the unhappy number. Those do not glorify God as God who do not trace all their goods things to God. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above," but many ungrateful hearts forget this truth, and receive the blessings of this life with dumb mouths and cold hearts. In the old time there were those who traced everything they saw to what they called "Chance;" that misformed deity has been laid aside, and on its pedestal men have set up another idol known as "Nature."

Nowadays swarms of people attribute everything that is great and wonderful—they talk forever of "the beauties of nature" "the grandeur of nature," and "the laws of nature;" but God is as little spoken of as if he were not alive. As to laws of nature, these occupy with moderns much the same place as the deities of Olympus with the ancients. What are the laws of nature but the ordinary ways in which God works? I know of no other definition of them. But these people attribute to them a sort of power apart from the presence of the Creator.

One standing up in the street, venting his infidelity, said we could not do better on Sunday than go abroad and worship nature. There was nothing that was so refining and elevating to the mind as nature. Nature did everything. A christian man in the crowd ventured to ask, "What is nature?" And the gentleman said, "Well, nature—well—it is nature. Don't you know what it is? It is nature." No further definition was forthcoming; I fear the term is only useful as enabling men to talk of creation without being compelled to mention the Creator.

I find nowadays that people talk about "Providence," and yet discard God. Among the vulgar and the ungodly this is another subterfuge to avoid the ascribing of their blessings to the Giver of them. A farmer, whose crops had failed a second time, was consoled by a clergyman, because he suffered from the hand of Providence. "Yes," said he "that Providence is always treating me shamefully; but there's one above that will stop him." The poor soul had heard of Providence till he thought it an evil power, and hoped that the good God would curb its mischievous influence. This comes of not speaking plainly of God. For what is Providence? Can there be such a thing without the constant working of the Great Provider?

Men talk of "Foresight." But is there any foresight without the eye? Is there not some living eye that is watching for our good, some living hand that is following up the eye, and providing for our needs? Man does not like to think of his God. He wants to get away into a far country, away from God his Father; and he will adopt any sort of phrase which will help him to clear his language of all trace of God. The heathen often attributed their prosperity to "fortune;" some of them talked of "chance;" others discoursed of "fate." Anything is to man's taste rather than blessing the great Father, and adoring the one God. If they prospered, they were "lucky;" this was instead of gratitude to God. They looked into the almanac to find lucky days; this instead of faith in the Most High. Have we not some now who bless their good luck, and still talk about their fortunate stars? God whom they knew they do not honor as God. Yes, and we have among us men who talk neither of "fortunes" nor of "nature," but of themselves. They are styled "self-made men," and they are very prone to worship the great self who made them; they are never backward in that cult. Their adoration of themselves is constant, reverent, and sincere. "Self-made men," indeed! Infinitely better is it to be a God-made man. Justice makes a black mark

against those who do not ascribe their good things to God, from whom they thankful.

There are some others who know God, who fail to glorify him as God, because they do not trust him.

In revelation God has presented himself as the object of trust to his creatures, and he has promised that all who trust in him shall be forgiven their transgressions through the atonement of his Son, Jesus Christ. When proud man replies, "No, I shall trust in myself, trust in my own works, trust in my own prayers, but I shall not trust in Christ," then he knows God, but he glorifies him not as God, and when he perishes he will be without excuse. What kind of God is that whom we will not trust? How do we honor him when we refuse to believe him? Do we accept his Godhead, and yet refuse his mercy? This cannot be.

The counts are many against men, but this one more must be mentioned—many know God, but they never glorify him as God by submitting themselves to him, and yielding up their members to be instruments of his glory. If I glorify God as God, then I desire to obey God's commandments, to spread his glory, to magnify his name. I desire in all things to please him, if indeed I treat him as God should be treated. What enthusiasm ought to be kindled in our breasts by the belief that we are God's servant! "I am thy servant," is our happy claim, our honored challenge. This it is that makes a man of a man, and something more than man. Oh, to learn this lesson, and to practice it! To glorify God as God will make us akin to angels! Even you christians may feel that this is much beyond you yet, but toward it you must ever fly. I shrink before my Lord in speaking of him, but I desire that I have not yet attained—that I may truly glorify him as my Lord and my God.

II. Now we come to consider the second sin. May the word which I may have to say about it be blessed to many of my hearers by the power of the Holy Spirit! The second sin is "neither were thankful."

Did you know, dear friends, that unthankfulness was such a sin as this? Have you ever thought of it in this light before—that men were without excuse because when they knew God they were not thankful? Unthankfulness is a sin for which there is no excuse if it be attended with knowledge. I fear there are thousands who call themselves christians, who are not thankful, and yet they never thought themselves very guilty on that account. Yet you see these sinners were without excuse, because they were guilty of a great sin before God, and that sin was unthankfulness. I tremble both for myself and you when I see want of thankfulness thus set in the front rank of sins. How is it that we may be unthankful?

I answer, first, there is in some a want of gratitude for mercies possessed. They receive many blessings without making a note of them, or even seeming to know that they have them. Their daily mercies seem to come in always at the back door, where the servants take them in and never tell their master or mistress that they have arrived. They never receive their mercies at the front door with grateful acknowledgements; but they still continue dumb debtors, daily owing more, but making no attempt at a return. Many professors are of that kind—recipients of countless mercies, but destitute of such common thankfulness as even beasts might manifest.

Some show this unthankfulness in another way, for they always dwell most on what they have not got. They have manna, and that is angels' food; but then they have no fish, and this is a ready theme for grumbling. They talk very loudly of "the fish we did eat in Egypt," and lament those ample feasts provided by the muddy Nile. Moreover, they have none of those delightful vegetables—the leeks, and the garlic, and the onions. They have none of these rank luxuries, and therefore again they murmur, and call the manna "light bread." They put this complaint over and over again to Moses, till Moses must have been sick of them and their garlic.

They said that they could not get leeks, and cucumbers, and onions, and that they were therefore most hardly done by, and would not much longer put up with it. Thankless rebels!

Some fail, also, in their singing of God's praises. I knew a dear old Methodist preacher, who is now in heaven, who when he came down stairs of a morning was always tooting a bit of a hymn over, and he did the same in the barn, and the field. I have passed him in the street, and noted his happy melody; indeed he was always singing. He never took much notice of anybody, so as to be afraid of being overheard. Whether people heard him or not did not make much difference to him. He was singing to the Lord, not to them; and so he went on singing. I do not think he had much of a voice, or an ear for music, but his soul was made up of praise, and that is better than a musical education. God does not criticise our voice, but he accepts our heart. Oh, to be singing the praises of God every minute of our lives, and never ceasing therefrom!

It is plain that many are not thankful to God, for they never praise him with their substance. Yet when the Jew was thankful, he took care to give a portion to the house of the Lord; before he would eat of his corn he would send his sheaf to the sanctuary. If we are grateful to God, we shall feel that the first thing to do is to give of our substance an offering of thanksgiving to the Most High. But this does not strike some people, whose religion is so spiritual that they cannot endure to hear of money, and they faint at the sound of a collection. I am afraid their thankfulness is not worth more than what they pay to express it; that is to say, nothing at all. God deliver us from such a state of heart as that; and may we never, in any of these senses, be found among those professors, of whom it is said that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were they thankful.

III. Listen to me now carefully for two or three minutes while, in the third place, I mention, very briefly and solemnly, what was the result of this.

They knew God, but they glorified him not as God, neither were they thankful. And the first result of it was that they fell into vain imaginings. If we do not glorify God, the true God, we shall soon be found setting up another god. This vain-imagination business is being done quite as extensively now as in Paul's days. Depart from the inspiration of the Bible, and from the infallibility of the Spirit of God who wrote it, and where will you go? Well, I cannot tell where you will go. One wanders into one vain imagination, and one into another, till the dreamers are on all sides. I expect to see a new doctrine every day of the week now. Our thinkers have introduced an age of inventions, wherein everything is thought of but the truth of God. We do not want these novelties. We are satisfied with the Word of God as we find it. But if you do not glorify God as God, and are not thankful to him for all his teaching, then away you go into vain imaginings.

And what next? Well, away goes the mind of man into all sorts of sins. The chapter describes unnatural lusts and horribly fierce passions. Men that are not satisfied and thankful—men that have no fear of God before their eyes—it were a shame for us to think, much more to speak, of what they will do. A heart that cannot feed at God's table will riot somewhere. He that is not satisfied with the cup that God has filled will soon be a partaker of the cup of devils. An unthankful spirit is, at bottom, an atheistic spirit. If God were God to us, we should not be unthankful to him.

It seems that these people, of whom Paul wrote, fell into all kinds of bitterness, such as envy, murder, deceit, malignity, whispering, backbiting, hating of God. They became spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, and so forth. Well, if your spirit is not sweetened by the adoration and the love of God, it will grow bitter. If love does not reign, hate will rule. Look at unthankful people. Hear them talk Nobody's character

is safe. There is no neighbor whom they will not slander. There is no Christian man whom they will not misrepresent. O brothers and sisters, dread unthankfulness! Perhaps you did not think that it was so bad, but it is horrible! God help you to escape from it!

IV. And that you may escape from it, let us finish up by this exhortation. Let us fly by the help of God's Spirit from these two sins. "Oh," says one, "I am full of sin." Come and glorify God, then, by confessing it to him. "Oh, but I am not pardoned." Come and glorify him by accepting pardon through the blood of his dear Son. "Oh, but I am of an evil heart." Come and glorify him by telling him so, and asking His Spirit to renew you in your mind. Come, yield yourself to his sweet Gospel. May his blessed Spirit incline you so to do. Come, take him now to be your God. Have you forgotten him? Remember him. Have you neglected him? Seek him. Have you offended him? Mourn before him. Say, "I will arise, and go unto my Father." Your Father waits to receive you. Glorify him as God.

And then, next, let us begin to be very thankful, if we have not been so before. Let us praise God for common mercies, for they prove to be uncommonly precious when they are once taken away. Bless God that you were able to walk here, and are able to walk home again. Bless God for your reason; bless him for your existence. Bless God for the means of grace, for an open Bible, for the throne of grace, for the preaching of the Word. You that are saved must lead the song. "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name." Bless him for his Son. Bless him for his Spirit. Bless him for his Fatherhood. Bless him that you are his child. Bless him for what you have received. Bless him for what he has promised to give. Bless him for the past, the present, and the future. Bless him in every way, for everything, at all times, and in all places. Let all that is within you bless his holy name. Go your way rejoicing. May his Spirit help you so to do!

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