



J.C. Philpot

Expositions of
HOLY SCRIPTURE

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By
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Edited by
James E. North and Matthew J. Hyde

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This selection of J. C. Philpot's Expositions of
Holy Scripture

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Abbreviations used throughout this book:

Expositions and Prayers = *Expositions of Scripture and Prayers of the late J. C. Philpot* – published in 1880 by W. P. Dolby of Stamford and J. Gadsby of London.

Expositions = *Expositions of Scripture by J. C. Philpot* – published in 1870, by J. Gadsby, London, with a preface by F. Covell.

GP = *The Gospel Pulpit* – a series of sermons by J. C. Philpot published monthly during his life time and posthumously. Early editions published by J. Ford, Stamford, in 20 vols.; also in 10 double vols. Two editions published by F. Kirby, London, in 10 vols. – 1898-1900, and 1900.

GS = *The Gospel Standard* – a monthly magazine published continuously from August 1835 – to date.

Contents

	Page
Original Preface.....	7
A Word Concerning this Edition.....	9
Historical Introduction.....	11
 Expositions:	
1. Psalm 25: 1-4.....	15
2. Psalm 32: 1-6.....	20
3. Psalm 65: 1-4.....	27
4. Psalm 89: 15-18.....	33
5. Psalm 103: 10.....	37
6. Psalm 110.....	43
7. Psalm 127.....	50
8. Psalm 130.....	55
9. Psalm 133.....	68
10. Psalm 138.....	72
11. Psalm 139: 4-10.....	78
12. Ecclesiastes 3: 1-9.....	82
13. Isaiah 28: 1-3.....	94
14. Isaiah 44: 1-5.....	99

15. Isaiah 66: 1-3.....	105
16. Jeremiah 1: 4-10.....	110
17: Jeremiah 2: 1-7.....	115
18: Jeremiah 31: 6-9.....	120
19. Matthew 20: 20-28.....	126
20. Luke 12: 35-37.....	131
21. John 6: 26-29.....	136
22. 2 Corinthians 4: 1-4.....	141
23. Philippians 3: 7-16.....	148
24. Colossians 1: 9,10.....	154
25. Hebrews 2: 9,10.....	159
26. Hebrews 2: 10-14.....	165
27. Hebrews 2: 14,15.....	171
28. Revelation 7: 9-18.....	175
Appendix:	181
Exposition: Hebrews 2: 5-8.....	182
Prayer.....	187
Sermon: 1 Corinthians 5: 7-8.....	190

Original Preface

Dear Friends

The following expositions, by our late dear friend Mr. Philpot, were not intended for publication, but were the utterances of his tongue, flowing from a feeling heart toward a people over whom the Holy Ghost had made him overseer. In them you may see the love, anxiety, and desire of the Pastor's heart for the comfort and confirming and well-being of their souls; that they might never rest in any thing short of a divine power felt and realized, and a life and walk becoming the gospel; and how earnestly he contended for the effects of that grace, when realized in the heart, which is *to deny ungodliness and worldly lust, and to live godly, soberly, and righteously &c.*; knowing well, as he did, that the doctrine of grace, when only received in the judgment, produces no good fruit, but rather, as a rule, a loose and careless life and walk. He deals some blows to the errors and heresies of the present day, from which it was his soul's desire that his people might be preserved, and, as a loving Pastor, he cautions and warns them against them. His aim in these Expositions is to feel after a vital union to the Son of God, and not rest in anything short of it, and so *to stir up their loose minds* in what they had received, and in what was lacking.

These Expositions, as his hearers are aware, generally had a bearing upon the sermon that was to follow; therefore, there was no need of a fuller treatment of the subject. This is the

J. C. Philpot: Expositions of Holy Scripture

reason why they are not more elaborate - it being also his aim and desire to open up the word to his people in the most simple and edifying way for their soul's profit, that they might grow in grace and knowledge; for in these, no less than in his preaching, he strongly contended that grace felt in the heart would bring a godly experience, and a practice accordingly would follow. *Make the tree good and the fruit will be good.*

It is to be regretted there were not more of them taken down, but it was felt that these would be prized by those who heard them, and might be profitable to those who had not. Therefore, we *gather up the fragments*; and such as they are we present them to you, and may *He though dead yet speak.*

Francis Covell

Croydon

1870

A Word Concerning this Edition

The Pulpit Expositions of J. C. Philpot were originally published in 1870 with the forgoing preface by Francis Covell. A second volume, with some of Philpot's Pulpit Prayers which had originally been published as addenda to the *Gospel Pulpit* series of sermons, was later published by both Dolby of Stamford and Gadsby of London in 1880. Both these volumes have been long out of print and unobtainable on the second-hand market. Copies of the original editions are not to be found in the British Library nor in any of the Copyright Receipt Libraries.

Thanks are expressed to both Mr. Malcolm Pickles of Coventry, UK, and Dr. Joel Beeke of Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA, who provided copies of the volumes from their own libraries. Four further expositions have been added taken from *The Gospel Standard*, 1872 & 1874, and *The Sower*, 1948. We also have to acknowledge our indebtedness to the work undertaken by the late K. W. H. Howard in his *A Comprehensive Textual Index of the published Sermons and Pulpit Expositions of Joseph Charles Philpot* (1972).

The expositions have been reprinted as originally published, with one or two exceptions where we have made additions to clarify the text. These additions have been placed in square brackets, thus []. The expositions have been placed in textual order, with the exception of the exposition printed in the Appendix. The sources of the expositions, and where known

J. C. Philpot: Expositions of Holy Scripture

the details of the sermons delivered at the same time, are given in footnotes.

The Pulpit Prayers have not been included in this edition.

James E. North

March 2012

Historical Introduction

While we may have many published sermons left on record, it is often hard to gain a full idea of any man's pulpit labours. We know that a man's prayers in the pulpit can be as effectual at times in the hearts of his hearers as his ministry. However, when we come to Mr. Philpot, we do have something which approaches a record of several whole services, including his prayers. The contents of this volume form part of that record, allowing the reader to form some idea of the character of Mr. Philpot's complete pulpit labours. We have included in the Appendix an example of a whole service—exposition, prayer and sermon—as delivered by Mr. Philpot to his congregation at Stamford.

It has been handed down that, although Mr. Philpot's sermons appear long, his prayers were short. While it is true that many of Mr. Philpot's published sermons are indeed exceptionally long, we know that the length of these sermons was a result of Mr. Philpot's editing and expansion of the matter in preparation for the press. Indeed, several unedited sermons of Mr. Philpot, which were posthumously published from the shorthand, are proof that, as delivered, Mr. Philpot's sermons were not over long. From the few extant prayers, published from the shorthand, there is indication that Mr. Philpot was not lengthy in prayer either; they rarely exceed much beyond two pages of text laid out in uniform with the *Gospel Pulpit* sermons.

J. C. Philpot: Expositions of Holy Scripture

In this volume we have the third aspect of Mr. Philpot's pulpit labours: his expositions. It would appear that it was Mr. Philpot's custom, that having read a portion of Scripture, he would briefly expound the passage before he prayed. Where we know the date of the delivery of these expositions and sermons, it becomes apparent that generally the passage of Scripture expounded, and thus presumably the passage of Scripture read, were not the same as that preached from. Take, for example, Exposition 25 on Hebrews 2: 10-14; this was delivered preceding Sermon 237 of the *Gospel Pulpit* series, the text of which was John 1: 11-13. Similarly, Exposition 20 on 2 Corinthians 4: 1-4, preceded Sermon 248, the text of which was Philippians 4: 6-7. Of note, some of the expositions were given consecutively, for example, the series of four expositions on Hebrews 2, although from the records of Mr. Philpot's ministry it never appears to have been his custom to preach consecutively through the Scripture in any way.

The custom of expounding the word read outside of the sermon is not normal amongst "Gospel Standard" churches. Similarly, it is common practice that the portion read is that in which the text for the sermon is found. It may be asked why Mr. Philpot's practice differed from this pattern. We can only hypothesise that he continued the form of service to which he had been accustomed in the Church of England. The prayer book provides "lessons" (passages of Scripture) appointed to be read at worship on every day of the year, irrespective of the text from which the minister felt led to preach. It was custom in many churches that the minister might briefly expound the lesson separately from his sermon.

J. C. Philpot: Expositions of Holy Scripture

Whether this was the reason for Mr. Philpot's practice we have no proof, but it is a possible explanation.

Of interest, all the expositions recorded were delivered in the chapels at Stamford and Oakham, of which Mr. Philpot held the joint pastorate. We do not know whether he gave similar expositions when preaching away from home.

While we would pass no judgement on Mr. Philpot's practice, we commend these expositions to the reader, believing they will find the glorious Gospel declared herein in the same warm and experimental manner that is so evident in all Mr. Philpot's published writings.

Matthew J. Hyde

March 2012

J. C. Philpot: Expositions of Holy Scripture

[1]

PSALM 25: 1-4

*Unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul. O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me. Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed: let them be ashamed which transgress without cause. Shew me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths.*¹

True prayer is very solemn work, and when we think for a moment what true prayer is we must confess how little we pray. It is one thing to use words of prayer—it is one thing to fall upon our knees and utter expressions to the dread majesty of heaven—but to be solemnly engaged with the great heart-searching God is another matter. Nor can we pray spiritually and acceptably but by the express power of the Holy Ghost resting upon us.

“Unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul.” Not his words merely but his soul. His soul had been in a low spot, dejected and depressed through various cares and temptations and trials, and by the Lord’s help and blessing he was enabled to lift up his soul; so that in praying to the Lord he lifted up his soul unto him—prayer as it were bringing his soul out of that low spot into which it had sunk. To lift up one’s soul unto

¹ Source: *Expositions and Prayers*. Delivered at Stamford, undated; the sermon preached following this exposition was published as *GP* No. 246, text: John 17: 3.

J. C. Philpot: Expositions of Holy Scripture

God is to lift it out of unbelief and worldliness into which it so often sinks, carnal ease and vain security into which it so often drops, and out of self which surrounds it as a thick hedge. Out of all these things does a man lift his soul when the Holy Ghost puts his hand beneath him. He is spoken of as “helping our infirmities,” and that by taking hold of us, as the word means in the original; thus holding us up when we could not stand. There is much also in the expression “unto thee.” No one else but thee, I stand in thy presence, I come unto thee who art able alone to help. “Unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul.” Prayer seems a very easy thing to ignorant men, yet it is one of the hardest things in the world. No one can pray spiritually except by the help of God.

“O my God I trust in thee.” Here is another impossibility. How can any man trust in a God, whom he has never seen? It is impossible. How can a man trust in God whom he has never known? It is impracticable. We must know God - see him, and believe in him, before we can trust in him. It is written on toll bars, “No trust here,” then a man cannot go through on trust; he must pay. But that is not written on the gate of heaven; it is all trust, we have nothing to pay, and if we had to wait until we could pay before we could enter, we should have to stand without and never get in. Now to trust God is to feel and believe in God, in his existence, character, in what he is in himself, and that by a saving faith. To trust in God is to believe in him in the dark, and when all things are against the soul, when there is nothing but a naked promise to hang upon. Then is the time to trust in God, when all things are against you. Whom are the persons you would trust? There are some persons from whose lips you would not

J. C. Philpot: Expositions of Holy Scripture

trust a word. Would you trust them with all your possessions? Here are two persons. The one is no Christian and the other man is. The one man you know to be a rank liar, but the other is a man of honesty. Which would you trust? Can we believe in God? Yes; he is a God who cannot lie. So when we can see that he is a God who cannot lie nor deceive; then we can trust in him; and if we find him faithful to his promise then we believe in him. If we could see our road where would be trust? If you were to see a friend in some large town you never were at before, say, at Leeds, Hull, or Sheffield, suppose you travelled there, and your friend meeting you was to say, "I will take you home to my house," he would take you away through perhaps a great many streets, lanes and alleys. Would you not go through all these streets, lanes and alleys? Why? Because you trust he is taking you to his own home. So if you can believe that God can take you home, he will take you, up this court perhaps, and down the other street, and so on to the end of the journey; then you must depend upon the Lord to take you home as you would upon your friend, and this is trusting.

"Let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me." David had been highly favoured, and he had spoken very lightly; but he got into the dark; then his enemies, if the Lord were to leave him, would triumph. They would say, "Where is your faith? Your God is not the God you said he was—the Lord does not appear for you now." Then David would have been ashamed if the Lord had not appeared and given his enemies such cause to triumph and rejoice. He prays that the Lord might seal him a promise to his heart, as he had done

J. C. Philpot: Expositions of Holy Scripture

when he said he should be on Saul's throne or else his enemies would triumph and he be ashamed.

"Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed." He enlarges his desires here beyond the narrow limits of self, which we see much stamped upon the character of David, as though he should say, "I am not so selfish as to bear myself alone before thee, but I pray for all those looking up to thee to supply their need, for all that wait upon God, that God would bring them off more than conquerors, that they might be enabled to wait upon God, to hang upon his promises and seek his face, and that the Lord would appear for them in his own time and way."

"Let them be ashamed which transgress without cause." There are those who will be ashamed, for we read that there will be those who will rise to everlasting contempt and who will be covered with shame; and this will cover them with shame more than anything else—that they have transgressed without cause—that they have run into sin without temptation. The saints of God are overrun by temptation; they are entangled, overpowered; but the ungodly sinner sins without temptation, because he loves sin; but upon these David imprecates that terrible declaration of his wrath. "Let them be ashamed which transgress without cause."

"Shew me thy ways O LORD, teach me thy paths." Are you not struck with the simplicity of Scripture? You are tried sometimes—perhaps that you cannot pray in becoming language, that you cannot use fine words or eloquent expressions. Where do you find them in the prayers of the saints? What are these words of truth and righteousness in

J. C. Philpot: Expositions of Holy Scripture

which the Lord leads his family in prayer? He covers these words by a divine unction laid upon that we need not be ashamed.

“Teach me thy paths.” Certain paths in which the just walk—
“The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” Now this way and this path lead to heaven. The soul desires the Lord to show it and teach it, for it feels utterly unable to show or teach itself. And the Lord often casts a light upon his ways, and especially the great way Jesus Christ, and teaches the soul what his paths are, that they are paths of tribulation and affliction; yet by faith, godly fear, and every good path. And he teaches them not only what these paths are; but gives them strength and grace to walk therein.

[2]

PSALM 32: 1-6

*Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah. I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah. For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him.*²

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.” How different is the estimate which God forms and gives of happiness from that conceived by the heart and uttered by the mouth of man! If man had to write out of his heart what he conceived to be really blessings, would he give vent to the same description of beatitudes as we find in the commencement of the Sermon on the Mount? Would he begin with “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven?” Would he not rather say, “Blessed are

² Source: *Expositions*, p. 31-35. Delivered at Stamford, on Lord’s Day morning, October 13th, 1861; the sermon preached following this exposition was published as GP No. 45, text: Galatians I: 4-5.

J. C. Philpot: Expositions of Holy Scripture

the rich, for theirs is the kingdom of earth? Blessed are they that have health, strength, and good spirits, for they shall never mourn. Blessed are the proud, for they shall keep up a proper appearance, and carry their heads high above their fellow men. Blessed are they which have everything that heart can wish, for they never shall know either want or poverty. Blessed are the unforgiving and unmerciful, for that shows a proper spirit. Blessed are the unclean in imagination, for they can make up in imagination what they cannot carry out in act. Blessed are the quarrellers, for by quarrelling with men, one displays a right spirit and is not trodden under foot.” So how man, if he could really give vent to what his heart conceives, would contradict the whole list of God’s beatitudes. And so in the words before us—“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered”—how few there are who really enter into the blessedness here pointed out, how few even know it in sweet experience, how few can appropriate it as a blessing from God, in having a testimony that their transgressions are forgiven and that their sins are covered. Yet what blessedness is there in the absence of these blessings?—to live and die an unpardoned transgressor—to live and die with our sins resting upon our guilty head—to endure the curse of God, and to have that which shall be a flaming forth of his indignation for evermore. But “Blessed is he”—however poor he may be in this world’s goods; however despised by his fellow men; whatever perplexities may beset his path; whatever the difficulties with which he may be surrounded;—“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered” by the robe of righteousness; whose iniquities are washed out in the fountain opened for all sin

J. C. Philpot: Expositions of Holy Scripture

and all uncleanness, and whose transgressions are covered by the imputed obedience of the Lord the Lamb.

“Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.” Wherever the Lord imputes righteousness, he does not impute iniquity; wherever he imputes iniquity, he does not impute righteousness. That is, we must either stand before God with all our sins upon our guilty head, and all our transgressions set down to our account, contracting thereby a huge debt which we never can pay; or else we must stand before God in the imputed obedience of his dear Son. Now “Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity,” that is, whom he views complete in Christ, whose sins he has put away by atoning blood, and whose person is covered by the robe of righteousness which the Son of God wrought out and brought in.

“And in whose spirit there is no guile.” There must be guile, more or less, in a man’s spirit, until he has received some manifestation of pardoning love; for nothing but the plain and clear forgiveness of all his sins will remove guile out of his heart. There will be a degree of self-righteousness, self-justification, and a measure of hypocrisy, except so far as there is a sense of pardoned sin. It is like a child in fault. If a child transgress, and you manifest displeasure against the child for that transgression, it will do everything it can to justify itself; and if its conscience is hardened, the child will even lie that it may evade the dreaded punishment. But forgiveness, free forgiveness, takes the guilt out of the child’s spirit: it knows it may confess, because it does not dread the

J. C. Philpot: Expositions of Holy Scripture

rod. And so it is in divine things. As long as you lie under a fearful sense of God's displeasure, there will be a measure of self-justification in your heart; there will be a degree of guile. But when the Lord is pleased to speak a pardoning word home to your soul, and to reveal to you full forgiveness of all sins, then you will freely confess them; you will be able to tell the Lord how base you have been, because the guile which was in you has been removed out of your spirit. You have nothing to keep back, because all is forgiven; you have no justification to bring forward, because you need none; and you need not stand upon the footing of self-righteousness, because you can stand upon the obedience of the Son of God. It is like the case of two friends, who may have been at variance. Each will justify himself until the breach is healed; but if a reconciliation take place, then each party may confess his wrong. So with God and man: whilst they are at variance, there will not be free confession; but when they are reconciled by the blood of the Lamb, then, the breach being healed, man may acknowledge freely that he has sinned before God, because he knows God will not take advantage of his confession. He knows the Lord will not say, "You acknowledge you are guilty, and therefore if I send you to hell, you will justify me." But when the Lord is pleased to manifest his mercy, then the conscience will take no advantage of it, and therefore makes the confession as plain and clear as it can.

But David goes on to describe how he was put in possession of this blessing: "When I kept silence my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long." David felt he was a sinner: it was charged upon his conscience, but he could not

J. C. Philpot: Expositions of Holy Scripture

confess his sin. He felt the weight and burden, but was not brought to honest confession. Therefore he kept silence. What with self-righteousness, self-justification, the guilt still in his heart, and want of power to acknowledge his transgression, he kept silence; and what was the consequence? “His bones waxed old through his roaring all the day long.”

“For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me.” God was determined to bring him down and make him confess his sin; and for a while there was a controversy between David and God. David was determined not to confess, and God determined that he should. Therefore, God put his hand heavy upon him, afflicted him in body, in family, and in soul; and under the afflicting hand of God, his “moisture”—that is, his spiritual moisture—was “turned into the drought of summer.” Our translators have not exactly hit the meaning of the words: they should have said was “turned,” instead of “is turned” because he is not describing his present state, but his state in days long past. The hand of God being heavy upon him, the wrath of the Almighty drinking up his spirit, his spiritual moisture—that is, the soft and tender feelings of the soul—was so dried up within him, that, like a field under a scorching sun, the life and power of God seemed drained away out of his soul, and he had miserable feelings in consequence.

Now David was brought by the hand of God upon him, and cut down by some softening of spirit, to this point: “I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity I did not hide.” It reads in our version, “mine iniquity have I not hid.”

J. C. Philpot: Expositions of Holy Scripture

That will do; but it would be better to read it thus: “I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity I did not hide.” He was brought to confess his sins, and to acknowledge his transgressions, and no longer could conceal in his bosom the iniquity he was conscious of, but spread out the whole before God; made, as people say, a clean breast of it. Whatever was in his heart he freely turned out. He confessed all his sins with weeping eyes and broken heart.

And then he tells us what was the blessed consequence: “I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.” When he was enabled to confess, then God was pleased to forgive; and, according to God’s own testimony, there is no forgiveness without it. “If we confess our sins, he faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” But this is about the last spot that persons come to. I have had a large acquaintance with persons, but how few I have found who would confess they were wrong; how few broken hearts, how few tender consciences amongst those who declare themselves friends of Jesus; how rarely they will acknowledge they are wrong; how they stand out in self-righteousness and self-justification and plead excuses without end; in short, how they do every thing to avoid that humbling spot, of acknowledging their transgression. But there is no forgiveness without it, neither from God nor man. There is no real manifestation of God’s pardoning love to the soul of any man who is not brought to confess his sins. Therefore, the best way—I may say the only way to get pardon and peace is to confess; not to stand out as many of you do in pride and self-righteousness, but where wrong to confess your wrong,

J. C. Philpot: Expositions of Holy Scripture

to put your mouth in the dust and acknowledge your transgression. Then you will have peace in your conscience. He will bring near the obedience of Jesus and shed abroad his love in your heart.

Therefore, David says, “for this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found.” Every one that is godly will pray for this; if ungodly, we must leave them, to fill up the measure of their iniquities; but every one that is godly, who has the fear of God in his heart, and a conscience made tender, will pray unto the Lord in a time when he may be found; in this gospel-day, when mercy still speaks as a voice from heaven.

“Surely in the floods of great wasters”—when God’s anger bursts forth against transgressors—“they shall not come nigh unto him.” He will stand secure upon the rock, amid a blazing world.

[3]

PSALM 65: 1-4

*Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion: and unto thee shall the vow be performed. O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come. Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away. Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple.*³

The marginal reading is very sweet here, and very expressive. I much like the marginal readings; they are almost always more literal, and therefore more expressive than the text. “Praise is silent for thee, O God, in Sion.” How often this is the case with the heart; it would praise, but cannot. We may compare the heart of a saint to a well-tuned instrument or lyre, which is capable of giving forth every sound, whether bass, tenor, or treble; but it requires a master hand to touch the string and bring forth a note. So, in the same way, we may say “Praise is silent in the heart.” It is there, but it cannot come forth till a master hand touch the string. You may think sometimes—you that are exercised and distressed in your mind—that the time never will come when you shall be able

³ Source: *Expositions and Prayers*. Delivered at Stamford, on Thursday evening, March 3rd, 1859; the sermon preached following this exposition was published as GP No. 245, text: 1 John 2: 15-17.

J. C. Philpot: Expositions of Holy Scripture

to praise God. Why, the Lord is making matter for praise in your heart now, and every exercise, trial, or temptation that you are passing through are being laid up in your heart as so much future matter for praise. For what are you to praise God for? For deliverance. Then what does deliverance imply? Trial, temptation, affliction, distresses, suffering. Therefore, these very trials that press you down, by reason of which you think sometimes you never will be able to praise God, are secretly laying up matter for praise in your soul. So that praise is silent in your heart. But because it is silent it will one day come forth.

“Praise waiteth for thee.” Take the reading as we find it. Praise waiteth for God to draw it forth. This is a very gracious mark of a child of God—that he cannot and will not praise God till God enable him. He would praise God, but he durst not; he would bless him, but he cannot. Therefore praise is waiting. Take the words in another sense. Here is the whole Church of God scattered in all quarters of the globe, many in them in trouble and sorrow, others to be brought forth in God’s own time and way—the Church not yet gathered together as it will be when it stands before God in Sion. Or it may be that praise is waiting, that is, gathering, collecting. But when the great and glorious day comes, then praise will pour forth from their lips and heart with one song of victory. So in this sense “Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion.”

Now, do you wait to praise God till God enable you? To praise God when you have no power in your heart to do so is to act the part of a hypocrite. Wait till the Lord enable you to do so, then you will praise him with cheerful lips, “and unto

J. C. Philpot: Expositions of Holy Scripture

thee shall the vow be performed.” We find under the old dispensation much mention made of vows, and we find how sedulous and strict people then were to perform their vows, as in Jephthah’s case, when it touched him to the very quick to do so. In this dispensation we do not make vows. It is not right to make them. No person ought to bind himself by any vow of any kind. The flesh cannot do so. And yet in a sense every child of God does make a vow - an implied one, though not expressed; and what is this secret vow? It is this: if the Lord is so kind as to manifest his love and mercy to his soul he will praise and thank him, and give him all the honour that is due to his glorious name. Here is a silent vow—not binding by so many words, but silent; registered by the eye of God, though not uttered; and in this sense the vow shall be performed. You have told the Lord, if ever he is pleased to remove the temptation, to deliver your soul and bring you forth, you will bless his holy name for it. There is a silent vow, and that vow ought to be performed, and the Lord will one day give you power to perform it.

“O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.” What a mercy it is for the church of God, and for every member of that church, that God hears prayer! What should we do? whither should we go if God did not hear prayer? What a refuge in time of trouble! What an encouragement to go to the throne of grace? What open arms of mercy are extended wide in this expression that God hears prayer! Of course it must be spiritual prayer, such as he indites by his Spirit, and such as he can and will bow down his ear to hear. But how did David know that God heard prayer? Because he had heard his prayer. If we can distinctly lay our hand on any

J. C. Philpot: Expositions of Holy Scripture

circumstance when we can say God has heard prayer we can say, “O thou that hearest prayer;” for thou hast heard mine.

“O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.” We cannot understand by that “all flesh” all men, for we know as a fact that all men do not come unto God. “Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.” And we know that thousands and tens of thousands neither come nor care to come to the God that answers prayer. For when a man knows by his own convictions that God hears prayer, he cannot and must not come if he designs in his mind to keep back what God may see fit to take away. He must come and lay his heart open, and tell God that he knows he hears prayer, and therefore he will hear his prayer. That very frame of mind indicates that he is willing that the flesh should be subdued. But by the word flesh we may understand “all God’s people in the flesh;” or we may understand the word to signify “those who are feeling the infirmities of the flesh.” In these senses all flesh comes unto God, though only so far as we feel the infirmities of the flesh do we come unto God, that the sins of the flesh may be pardoned and the flesh itself crucified and subdued.

This appears to be the meaning by the next verse. “Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.” Here is a saint of God mourning and sighing under the power and strength of sin. Nor does he speak as though one master sin held him down, but matters of iniquity—iniquity of all sorts—evil thoughts, desires, and inclinations; and he uses no light term—“iniquities”. This is the view a child of God takes of his own sins, though they be but

J. C. Philpot: Expositions of Holy Scripture

sins of thought, desire, and inclination. He can give them no lighter term than “iniquities.” He views them as black transgressions, as being committed against a God so pure, feeling that do what he may and will there are these sins, not in open action, but so far prevailing that he cannot subdue them. It is these that make him cry out, because his iniquities do prevail. You may have thought yourself a singular character—that no one carried such a heart as you do in your bosom; and you may have felt with Bunyan you could almost change hearts with anyone; and you may have been surprised to hear that other saints of God have been so troubled. Here you have this highly favoured saint of God making the same complaint when he says, “Iniquities prevail against me”

But was he without hope? Did he sink under their dominion? No; for he could say, “As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.” Here is the Christian’s spot; here is safe and solid ground for the saint to stand upon, although sins and iniquities prevail against him. This is to keep him from being a Pharisee—from confessing and bewailing the sins of his own nature, and not turning away from them by the strength of peace and pardon; but having a sweet confidence that they are pardoned through the love, atoning blood, and mercy of God, he joyfully cries, “As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.”

“Blessed is the man whom thou choosest and causest to approach into thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple.” Who is the man whom David pronounces blessed? Not the man who enjoys all worldly honours and riches and

J. C. Philpot: Expositions of Holy Scripture

comforts, but “Blessed is the man whom thou choosest.” This is plain enough. There can be no mistake or misunderstanding here. “Blessed is the man whom thou choosest.” He is blessed, and we may say that no other man is blessed but he—that no man is really blessed but the man whom God choosest or has chosen. But how are we to know that God has chosen us? How are we to read our title to this electing love? “And causeth to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts.” Wherefore whom God chooses, him he causes to approach by drawing him unto himself. The electing love of God draws that soul unto a fountain head. Thus he approaches unto the Lord. He cannot approach him by himself; but God by putting forth his power and love causes the soul to approach unto him. Here is the evidence of his eternal choice. If the Lord has caused you to approach him—if he has drawn your heart by the cords of love and bands of a man—you have a sweet evidence that you are a blessed man, because he has chosen you.

“That he may dwell in thy courts.” This does not mean merely the outer courts, but the courts of God’s house—the approaches to God’s goodness and mercy, as revealed in his dear Son; for as the “temple” was a type and figure of Christ, so the “courts” are types and figures of that which comes from Jesus.

“We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple.” There is no satisfaction here in this world—all is polluted, all is unclean; no solid satisfaction can we find. But there is such a thing as satisfaction; and we are satisfied with the goodness of God’s house and of his holy temple; even

J. C. Philpot: Expositions of Holy Scripture
with Jesus and all that he has; there is satisfaction, and
nowhere else.

[4]

PSALM 89: 15-18

Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day; and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted. For thou art the glory of their strength: and in thy favour our horn shall be exalted. For the LORD is our defence; and the Holy One of Israel is our king.⁴

There is a joyful sound; there is a knowing the joyful sound; and there is the blessing upon those who do know it. Now what is the joyful sound? It is an allusion to the trumpet of the Jubilee. You will recollect that every fifty years there was a Jubilee, and the trumpet proclaimed this Jubilee throughout the land. In the year of the Jubilee, those who had sold or mortgaged their houses, or even sold themselves as slaves, should return each man to his possession. It was a day of universal rejoicing, and its object was by type and figure to represent the Gospel day, whereby all debts are paid, all sins forgiven. And God, by sending forth his servants, blows, so to speak, through their instrumentality, the great trumpet, of which I was speaking a little time ago—the Jubilee trumpet, that sounds in the ears of debtors to mercy. And there is a

⁴ Source: *Expositions*, p. 17-19. Delivered at Stamford, on Lord's Day morning, March 31st, 1861; the sermon preached following this exposition was published as GP No. 39, text: Hebrews 12: 24.

J. C. Philpot: Expositions of Holy Scripture

people that know the joyful sound, that can tell it when they hear it, that know the tune, can sing the air, and in whose hearts it creates sweet melody; the reason being that it proclaims salvation to them.

Now look at the figure—the Jubilee trumpet. To whom would that trumpet bring blessed news? Not to the man who had got possession of his neighbour's property and had to give up, because the Jubilee trumpet proclaimed that each man should return to the family possessions. It was not good news to him who was called upon to give up a fair estate, a house, a vineyard, or an olive yard. It was not good news to him who had to give up a slave, especially if he had had this slave many years in his house, and he had become a very useful servant. But to the poor man who was in debt; to the poor man who was in prison; to the poor slave under a hard master,—to all these the trumpet had a joyful sound. The first moment that the herald came into the streets of the town and began to sound sweet music on that trumpet, the very heart would leap for joy of the poor debtor in gaol, or of the man going to get back his property, or of the poor slave in the master's house.

So it is in gospel things. Who are the people that know the Gospel sound? The poor, who have and are nothing in themselves. To these it is a joyful sound, that there is a salvation without money and without price; that there is a blessed Jesus who has paid the debt and reconciled them to God. Then, when they know the joyful sound, they find there is in it a blessedness unspeakable.

J. C. Philpot: Expositions of Holy Scripture

“They shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance.” Now, here is the Lord lifting up the light of his countenance upon the poor debtor whose debts are paid; upon the poor prisoner who comes out of gaol; upon the man who gets his property back:—here is the Lord lifting up upon him the light of his countenance to manifest that it was all real, that it was a joyful sound which God himself accepted and was well pleased with. Now, when you know something of the gospel for yourselves, and the gospel begins to make sweet music in your heart, then you will walk in the light of God’s countenance. He speaks peace to your soul, sprinkles the blood of the Lamb upon your conscience, and you walk before him in the light of his countenance. Now none can do this until their debts are paid, their sins forgiven, their iniquities pardoned, and all their backslidings healed.

“In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.” ‘In his name;’ which means the perfections of God; what he has revealed of himself, as his mercy, goodness, love, salvation. The “name” of God is the character of God as revealed in the Scripture, and more especially as manifested in his dear Son; for the Lord said, “I will send my angels to go before thee.” And he says, “They shall know my name: for by my name is represented my manifested perfections - my grace, my love, my mercy, and all that I am as God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.” Then in this name they rejoice; that is, in the perfections of God as made known to their heart in his goodness, mercy, and grace; in what he is to them as God and Father of Jesus, and their Father in Christ. And they rejoice in that name all the day—

J. C. Philpot: Expositions of Holy Scripture

so far as they are under the sweet influence of it; not that every day they are rejoicing in it.

“In thy righteousness shall they be exalted.” Exalted from earth to heaven; exalted from the dust of the dunghill to sit upon a throne, and be installed among the princes of Israel. And so they are exalted in Christ’s righteousness; for there is no other way in which the soul can be exalted.

“For thou art the glory of thy strength.” If they have any strength, it is in Christ; and they can glory in that if they cannot glory in their own. They can make their boast of his strength when he makes it perfect in their weakness.

“And in thy favour,”—by some manifestation of God’s tender love and mercy—“In thy favour our horn shall be exalted.” A horn was worn, I understand, in those days. At any rate, “the exalting of our horn” is a Scriptural figure: it means our head, our glory, what we delight in. “In thy favour our horn shall be exalted.”

“For the Lord is our defence;”—we have no other; “and the Holy One of Israel”—which is Jesus—“is our King,” before whom we bow, and whom we receive into our heart as our Lord and our God.

[5]

PSALM 103: 10-14

*He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.*⁵

Who that has a conscience in his bosom will not say “Amen” to this? Where should we be? What should we be if God had dealt with us after our sins? As regards even temporal matters we should have been paupers creeping upon the face of the earth; and as regards an eternal state hell would be our justly deserved portion. I have met with persons sometimes, who have not been altogether ignorant of the way of salvation, but who have not thought they were so bad as they really are. The fact is, these people never had a view of themselves, nor a view of the majesty of God, nor a view of the evil of sin, nor a knowledge of the curse of the law; for a sense of one, or all of these combined, must have convinced them that they were hell deserving sinners. Have you never felt upon your knees

⁵ Source: *Expositions and Prayers*. Delivered at Stamford, on Thursday evening, March 10th, 1859; the sermon preached following this exposition was published as GP No. 249, text: 1 John 5: 7-8.

J. C. Philpot: Expositions of Holy Scripture

that, to use a common phrase, it would serve you right if then and there God struck you down to hell? Have you had no base movements of the carnal mind, so that you have thought if God then and there smote you into perdition you would have your desert? Have you never felt your sins so aggravated, as committed against conscience, against light and against everything that could be a bar or restraint, as to wonder how God should let you remain on praying ground? What do you feel yourselves to be then, if not hell deserving sinners?

Now when you begin to feel that you are a hell deserving sinner you will wonder at the long-suffering of God, and you will enter into the meaning of the words: "He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities." For if God had dealt with us after our sins or rewarded us according to our iniquities, should we have been present this evening, still upon praying ground and having hope in his mercy? We should rather have been where Saul, Ahithophel, Cain and those that fell under the wrath of God are. You have tried, it may be, to repent sometimes, tried to move and melt your hard heart: with what success? None whatever! But get a view of God's goodness, mercy, and long-suffering as especially displayed in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that will soften and melt your hard heart, so that you will say, "What a long suffering God I have to deal with! Oh, how good he is! Truly he has not dealt with me after my sins, nor rewarded me after mine iniquities!" This will soften and melt the hard heart and cause tears of penitence and contrition flow. People think they will repent, especially at this season of the year—Lent, by putting the law before their eyes, arranging all their sins, and repenting of them. But with what

J. C. Philpot: Expositions of Holy Scripture

success? They may squeeze a few crocodile tears; but it is only that they may be more lifted up with Pharisaical pride than ever. It is the evangelical repentance, that which is produced by a view of the sufferings of the Lord the Lamb and of our sins, that is the repentance worth having.

“For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.” Can you tell the dimensions? Can you measure the altitude of the heaven from the earth? Scientific men have their “sections,” their “triangles,” their “coves,” and their mathematical instruments to measure the stars and their distances; but who has ever measured the distance between the heaven and the earth? Well, so great, as great as is the distance between the heaven and the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. “Them that fear him.” Have you any godly fear in your heart? If you can get there in your soul’s experience you have a promise: “For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.” And if ever you saw your sins in their right light you would see that nothing less than mercy like this would suit your case, or save your soul. “Is not thy wickedness great? And thine iniquities infinite?” said one of Job’s friends to him (Job 22: 5). And why? Because committed against an infinite God. It is the greatness of God that makes the sin so great. And because they are infinite they demand and infinite punishment. What! No getting out of it! How can they if they die without an interest in the only way of salvation? Is there to be a second delivering? Has God another Son to give, another covenant to make? Is there more blood to be shed? No! If we are not saved now, we shall not be saved at all. Then, what a mercy it is for you if you have any

J. C. Philpot: Expositions of Holy Scripture

fear of God in your heart, and thus have an interest in the mercy of God. This will encourage your soul and draw out prayer from your breast, and make you to see the plan of salvation. This will open your eyes, touch and melt your spirit, and break your heart, and enable you to bear everything you have to pass through.

“As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.” Can that be measured? How is a man going continually eastwards, and another man going continually westwards; can the man at the extreme east measure the distance between him and the extreme west? No! The more east a man goes the more east he may go, and the more west a man goes the more west he may go. Who can bring together these two quarters of heaven? So God removes his peoples’ transgressions. How can the east meet the west? It cannot! It is impossible! So God removeth the transgressions of his people as far as the east is from the west. As the Apostle Paul says, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8: 1). Therefore there is a blessedness in it, if God only is pleased to lay it with power upon your heart.

“Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.” Look at the pity of a father or mother to a child. Here is a child afflicted, perhaps from infancy, or run over, or crippled by some accident, or it may be laid upon a bed of sickness, suffering great pain; how the father or mother pities the child! how he compassionates it, and would almost take its place if he could. Well, “as a father

J. C. Philpot: Expositions of Holy Scripture

pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.” For he sees what trials you endure, what afflictions, what distresses, what suffering in body and mind! And how many things there are to draw forth his pity and compassion; for all these trials and troubles melt and move him! “Well, then,” you may say, “why does not the Lord relieve them?” I will show you. I am a father and see my child afflicted; but suppose that it was necessary that the child should pass through an operation, I might pity the child; but still I could not relieve it. When I was in London a deacon of the Gower Street Chapel had a child who was obliged to undergo an operation. The father pitied the child; but did that save the child going through the operation? No! For the operation was the only means of saving the child’s life. The father’s heart yearned over the child, and a most painful thing it was; but he could not stop the operation, yet he felt pity. So with God’s children, they have to undergo an operation. The lancet has to be applied to let out the matter, a certain process has to be gone through; and though the Father may pity, yet he cannot spare the suffering; for should he spare the suffering, then, so to speak, the life of the soul would be extinct. So do not you say, because you have this and that trouble, the Lord does not pity you, for as my friend in Gower Street pitied his child, yet as it was necessary the painful operation should take place in order to save its life he did not stop the surgeon’s hand; so God’s pity does not cause him to stay his hand, but still all the time “like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.”

“For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.” He knows what we are made of, how that we are made

J. C. Philpot: Expositions of Holy Scripture

from weak dust! Does not the Lord know our bodily frame? Does not the Lord know about my weak chest? The Lord knows all about it. He will not lay upon you more than you are able to bear. Does not the Lord know your spiritual frame, your circumstances, your experience, your state of soul? Yes! He knows it all, and he will not lay upon you more than you are able to bear. Oh! how frail our original, nothing but dust, a heap of dust; and then to return to dust. And knowing all this he bears with us, and a sense of this draws out the heart in love and affection toward him.