

The Strange Occupation of God

by Ian Paisley

God's pondering of our hearts is a demonstration of His love and care, and it is essential to understand and imitate Christ to experience His redemption and receive eternal life.

Duration: 39:04

Scripture: Proverbs 21:2-8

Topics: "Divine Love", "Salvation Through Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the salvation of humanity. The sermon begins by describing how angels were amazed when Jesus left his glorious throne to come to earth. It highlights how Jesus came to his own people, but they did not receive him. The preacher emphasizes the importance of looking to Jesus and calling upon his name for salvation. The sermon concludes with a reminder of God's love and the need to love and trust in Jesus because he first loved us. The preacher also references Proverbs chapter 21 and John 3:16 to support the message.

Transcript

You'll find an authorized version of the Holy Scriptures in the English tongue before you in the pure picket up. And let's turn to the twenty-first chapter of Proverbs, Proverbs chapter twenty-one. We're reading from verse one to verse eighteen.

The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord as the rivers of water. He turneth it whithersoever he will. Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord pondereth the hearts.

To do justice and judgment is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice. And high look, and a proud heart, and the ploughing of the wicked is sin. The thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness, but of every one that is hasty only to want.

The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death. The robbery of the wicked shall destroy them because they refuse to do judgment. The way of man is forward and strange, and as for the pure, his work is right.

It is better to dwell in the corner of the housetop than with a brawling woman in a wide house. The soul of the wicked desireth evil, his neighbor findeth no favor in his eyes. When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise, and when the wise is instructed, he receiveth knowledge.

The righteous man wisely considereth the house of the wicked, but God overthroweth the wicked for their wickedness. Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, and shall not be heard. A gift in secret pacifieth anger, and a reward in the bosom, strong wrath.

It is joy to the just to do judgment, but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity. The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead. He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man, he that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich.

The wicked shall be a ransom for the righteous, and the transgressor for the upright. Ending our lesson at verse 18, and God will see the reading of his infallible book to all our hearts in the Savior's name. I take the promised Holy Ghost, the blessed power of Pentecost, to fill me to the uttermost.

I take, thank God, he undertakes for me. And the people of God said, Amen. Be seated please.

My text tonight is Proverbs chapter 21, and the last part of verse 2. But the Lord pondereth the hearts. I have a most unusual subject. I have called it the strangest occupation of God Almighty.

But the Lord pondereth the hearts. The most unusual occupation of God Almighty is not a display of His omnipotence, or some staggering, gigantic act of His almightiness. It is rather His examination of your heart and my heart.

An examination of scrutiny which puts the focus of He who is life and light upon us. And it leads to a special observance of the thoughts and intents of the hearts of us all. The fleshly heart of man, as we know, is quite small.

And the spiritual heart, the center of his emotions, especially of his love and courage, might be quite small as well. But the word heart itself is most suggestive and expansive. When we speak of breaking one's heart, we speak of the greatest of grief.

To set one's heart on something, we mean greatly desiring that something. To take something to heart, we mean to be greatly upset because of that which we have taken to heart. And when we say that we are heartened, we mean to say we are encouraged and made cheerful.

Heartened means substantial, friendly, enthusiastic, heart to heart. God pondering, God looking, God examining, God focusing His light upon our heart is one of the most staggering examinations and exercises we could possibly imagine. The strange thing is the unusual use of this word, ponder, in the holy word of God.

It only occurs six times in the whole of the Bible. Its first occurrence is a command by God for its exercise. Proverbs 4, 26, ponder the path of thy feet.

Its second occurrence refers to the strange woman, lest thou should ponder the path of life. Proverbs 5, 6. Its third occurrence refers to this wonderful but strange exercise of God. For the eyes of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings.

Proverbs 5, 21. Its fourth occurrence refers to God's unceasing task. The Lord pondereth the hearts.

Proverbs 21, 2. Its fifth occurrence refers to the same truth as the fourth, but specifically to certain matters and actions. Doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? Proverbs 24, 12. And the sixth occurrence is the one occurrence in the New Testament.

It refers to the act of Mary, the mother of our Lord. Mary pondered them in her heart. Please note that the five occurrences that are in the book of Proverbs and only one occurrence is in the New Testament.

There are two Hebrew words that are translated by this word, ponder, in our authorized version in English. In Proverbs, the Hebrew word *polas*, Proverbs 52, verse 21, means to balance and to weigh. For the eyes of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings.

In Proverbs, chapter 21, verse 2, the word *tokan* is to arrange or to examine. The Lord pondereth the hearts. It is also used in Proverbs 24, 12, if thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not.

Doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? But in the New Testament, the word in the Greek is *samvalo*. It means to throw together all the thoughts of the mind and to compare with oneself and ponder in our hearts. Now, it's a very difficult task for we humans to understand the pondering of DNA.

But this New Testament verse brings us to a human being. And as we see what she did, we begin to understand what the Lord does when he ponders our hearts. We can grasp some of the meaning of his pondering when we understand how Mary pondered in her heart.

Look, chapter 2, verse 19, but Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. This text enables us to see the spirit of understanding and what pondering really is. And it leads us to explore the wonder of pondering by God, the blessed triune Jehovah, as he ponders about his own children.

The understanding of our own pondering will enable us to contemplate God's very own pondering. Here we have the heart of Mary pondering and preserving what she ponders in her heart. As I have said, the word translated here from the Greek is the word *samvalo*, meaning to throw the thoughts together in her mind, to compare in her heart, to scrutinize carefully within the depths of the soul.

What a miracle it is that the everlasting God, the Lord, the creator of the ends of the earth, who never faints nor is weary, occupies his time in pondering your heart and my heart. Mary wondered, but she did more than wonder, she pondered. There were three parts of Mary's intellect here at work.

She kept them in her heart. She weighed them over and she held on to them and grasped them with the grip of her memory. She first of all preserved them.

The matters were not forgotten. God does not forget the sons of men. How could Mary, the mother of our Lord, forget the miracle of her son? It was of her humanity that he was brought forth.

Mary was the closest of all human beings to the Christ of God. In the highest sense, she knew Jesus after the flesh. The birth of Christ most concerned her.

Therefore, she was totally taken up with him. By the same way as Mary was taken up with the birth of our Lord Jesus and the incarnation of the everlasting Son of God, so God is taken up with you and with me, with all we think, with all we do, with all we say and how we live. God has not isolated himself from you.

God is occupied by weighing you in the balances of his judgment. By discovering what is in your heart and what you say with your lips and what you purpose in the depths of your soul. With the reflection that comes to us as we understand a little about the thinking and pondering of Mary, we can learn by both comparison and contrast how God ponders our heart.

In the miracle of choice, we have the first parallel. Mary was chosen of God to be the vehicle by which the Son of God became the Son of Man and was born into the world of his own creating. The Word became flesh.

How the Father must have had his Son, his only Son, his well-beloved Son pondered in his heart at the time when he prepared in the womb of the virgin maiden a body for Jesus. I know no more powerful scripture than Psalm 139, verses 13 to 18. For thou hast possessed my reins, thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.

I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Marvelous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee when I was made in secret and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.

Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect, and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I could count them, they are more in number than the sand. When I awake, I am still with thee.

Not only did Mary ponder the birth of the Christ child, but the Lord Jesus Christ himself in that psalm is relating his own pondering of this great event of his incarnation and his coming into the world. But if he pondered that, how did his father ponder when he made and prepared for a son, a body? We think of God's pondering, and we think of one of his greatest of all miracles, the incarnation of God the Son. Old Joseph Irons put it well when he wrote the lines, What wonder in my Savior meet! His head, his hands, his sight, his feet, present to my astonished view, Eternal glories ever new, Poor and despised, yet rich and loved, Humble to death, his throne unmoved, A servant and a sovereign Lord, Reviled and murdered, yet adored, Pardon and life for his to give, He died that all his church might live, Became a curse yet designed to bless, He is the Lord, our righteousness.

He had not where to lay his head, Although the worlds were by a mead, He hungered, though he thousands fed, Sinless and yet for sin he bled, The Father's co-eternal Son, The friend of sinners though undone, The portion all believers crave, He's man to suffer, he is God to save. Although Mary pondered her son, Only the Father really pondered him, Robed as he was the true Joseph, In his Father's created coat of many colors. In any study of the garments That ever touched the flesh of Jesus, We should remember that the Father pondered them all.

The covering robe of our Lord's humanity, Pre His actual incarnation, Was of the Father's making. Listen to those words, A body hast thou prepared me. The literal meaning is, A body thou hast fitted unto me.

The first clothes that covered that flesh, Were fitted by His heavenly Father. Notice the first clothes that touched His body, Were swaddling clothes, The clothes of death, For He came to die. But when He was buried from the cross, What was His garment? He was wrapped in swaddling clothes again, By Joseph of Arimathea, And by Nicodemus who wrapped Him in.

These clothes after He arose from the dead, Were carefully folded, But the napkin which covered His head, Was folded by itself. Who robed Him before He came forth from the tomb? The Father. Who gave Him the victor's garments? The Father.

And when I open the book of the Revelation, I read in the midst of the seven candlesticks, One like unto the Son of God, And the first thing we're told about, Is His clothing. Clothed with a garment down to the foot, And geared about the paps with a golden girdle. And I turn to the end of the same book, And I saw heaven opened and behold a white horse, And He that sat upon Him was called faithful and true, And in righteousness He doth judge and make war.

And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, And His name is called. And the saints that come after Him are also clothed. The armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, Clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

And upon His vesture and upon His thigh, There was a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords. You will remember that the thigh of Jacob, After the night at Pen Isle was put out of joint, And he limped from the field where he had wrestled. But our Lord Jesus didn't limp, He had on His thigh this name, King of kings and Lord of lords.

What a son the Father pondered, What a saviour He is. We often sing that hymn, My Lord has garments so wondrous fine, And mere their texture fills, Its fragrance reaches to this heart of mine, With joy my being thrills. His life had also its sorrow sore, For all those had a part.

And when I think of the cross He bore, My eyes with teardrops start. His garments too were in cassia dipped, With healing and a touch. Each time my feet in some sin have slipped, He took me from its clutch.

In garments glorious He will come, To open wide the door, And I shall enter my heavenly home, To dwell forevermore. Out of the ivory palaces, Into a world of woe, Only His great eternal love made my Saviour go. Mary pondered these things, because she had been brought into intimate relationship with Him.

This text we are considering is a biographical note of the growing up of Christ. Some people are likable and wonderful afar off, but not so Christ. His greatness is His nearness.

The Son speaks of His nearness to His Father. The Father used the intimacy of the family term with the growing up of children. I have often wondered about those divinest of divine words in Proverbs 8 verse 23 to 31.

The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His way, before His works of old. Before any of His works. God the Son was there.

I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth. When there were no fountains abounding with water.

Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth. But as yet He had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When He prepared the heavens, I was there.

When He set a compass upon the face of the depths. When He established the clouds above. When He strengthened the fountains of the deep.

When He gave to the sea His decree that the water should not pass His commandment. When He appointed the foundations of the earth, then I was by Him. As one brought up with Him.

And I was daily His delight. Rejoicing always before Him. Rejoicing in the habitable part of the earth.

Rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth. Mark it carefully. For the earth was not even created at this time.

And my delights were with the sons of men. These are the matters which the son pondered concerning the father. And the father pondered concerning the son.

Mary sat still in her house. But she worked in the early days of Christ's babyhood and boyhood most directly for Him. He was her heart's delight.

Her service was a token of her love. In fact, she found her own salvation through Him and in Him. Her prophetic words are most wonderful.

Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior. And this was before she started to carry the blessed Savior in her womb. For He hath regarded the lowest state of His handmaiden.

For behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For thee that is mighty hath done great things and holy is His name. And His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation.

He has showed strength with His arm. He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He has put down the mighty from their seats and exalted them of low degree.

He hath filled the hungry with good things and the rich He hath sent empty away. He hath opened His servant Israel in remembrance of His mercy as He spake to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever. There is a heart open to ponder.

There is a heartbeat of our pondering. But how did the Father ponder Him? The ties of love which bound the Father to the Son are past finding out. But the Great Father in the eternal silences of the eternal throne room of deity pondered on the blessed Son of His love.

God the Father stopped. He brought the balances. He laid on the weights.

He examined and meditated on His own Son. So much so that when He saw Him in the baptismal water of Jordan He cried from the highest heaven, This is My beloved Son in whom I have watched Him for thirty years in that dark, accursed, sinful world. But My Son is unspotted.

In Him I am well pleased. Oh, what pondering was this! What an announcement it brought from the hidden heart of the Father God of eternity. It is the Great Father we adore in His baptismal sign.

It is He whose voice on Jordan's shore proclaimed His Son divine. The Father healed Him. Let our breath in answering praise ascend as in the image of His death we own our buried friend.

We see the consecrated grave. Along the path He trod. Receive us in the hallowed way of Thy holy Son of God.

Blessed Spirit, with intense desire solicit us, we bow. Baptize us with renewing fire and ratify the vow. Let earth and heaven our zeal record and future witness bear that we do Zion's mighty Lord our full allegiance swear.

Mary as the mother took up the child Jesus in her arms. But He had already taken up her in His arms. May we take Him in our arms as He has taken us in His.

What recollections Mary had of the son she bore. She forgot none of them. Note the preciseness of the scripture.

She kept all these things. Dear believer, I would ask you what recollections have you of the loving Savior? Do what Mary did. Love Christ.

Bless Christ. Praise Christ. Study Christ.

Ponder Christ. Comprehend Christ. Study the wonderful types which in the Bible sets Him forth.

Imitate Christ. This is acceptable to God as Father who so loved the world and you in that world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. What did God do? He exchanged His Son for you.

Just think about that. He exchanged His Son for you. He that spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? Let your vow be today and every day, love so amazing, so divine, shall have my life, my soul, my all.

Love Him because He first loved you. It was old John Newton who wrote the lines, Jesus Christ, the Lord's anointed, who has blood for sinners spilt, is a stone by God appointed and the church is on Him built, who delivers all who trust Him from their guilt. Many eyes at once are fixed on a person so divine.

Love with awful justice mixed in His great redemption shine. Mighty Jesus, give me leave to call Thee mine. By the Father's eye approved, though a voice is heard from heaven, sinners, this is my beloved, for your ransom freely given.

All offenses for His sake shall be forgiven. Angels with their eyes pursued Him when He left His glorious throne. With astonishment they viewed Him, put the form of servant on.

Angels worshipped Him who was on earth unknown. He came unto His own and His own received Him not. Satan and his host amazed, saw this stone and giant laid.

Jesus, though to death a beast, bruised the subtle serpent's head. When to save us on the cross His blood He shed. When a guilty sinner sees Him, while he looks, his soul is healed.

Soon this sight from anguish freezeth and imparts a pardon sealed. May this Savior be to all our hearts revealed. One final word to any lost soul in this meeting.

Behold tonight the Lamb of God taketh away the sin of the world. And by beholding Him, your sins will be cleansed away forever in His precious redeeming blood. And you will come closer to God's pondering.

For you will be one of His dear family. May you not miss the Son of God tonight through the temptations of a dark, evil world. But may you hasten to Him and fall at the feet of the cross, His feet at the cross.

Kiss those kneel-toed feet and receive His forgiveness. May it be so, for Jesus' sake. Let us bow our heads in prayer.

Father, we pray that Thou wouldst bless the lifting up of Thy Son tonight. And we pray that men and women and boys and girls may turn their eyes upon Jesus and look full in His wonderful face. May there be a coming to Christ, a calling upon the name of the Lord.

For whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. May it be so, for Jesus' sake. And the people of God say, Amen.

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