

Concluded Under and Burdened  
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**16 And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. 17 And the scroll of Isaiah the prophet was handed to Him. And He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:**

**18     “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me<sup>1</sup>,  
Because He anointed Me to bring good news to the poor.  
He has sent Me to proclaim release to captives,  
And recovery of sight to the blind, (Isaiah 42:7)  
To set free those who are oppressed, (Isaiah 58:6)  
19     To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.”**

**20 And He rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all the people in the synagogue were intently directed at Him. 21 Now He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your [a]hearing.” 22 And all the people were [b]speaking well of Him, and admiring the [c]gracious words which were coming from His [d]lips; and yet they were saying, “Is this not Joseph’s son?”**

**23 And He said to them, “No doubt you will [e]quote this proverb to Me: ‘Physician, heal yourself! All the miracles that we heard were done in Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.’” 24 But He said, “Truly I say to you, no prophet is welcome in his hometown. 25 But I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a [f]severe famine came over all the land; 26 and yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to [g]Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow.** This assertion by Jesus was troubling because it put forward the idea that miracles didn’t just happen—they were appointed by God as to time, place and recipient. The implication is offensive, suggesting that there were no **worthy widows in Israel** but God appointed that the widow woman in Zarephath would receive succor and miraculous help! She was a foreigner and the people of Nazareth felt that God’s favor was their prerogative. This selfishness was revealed by their reaction to what God did for others, while

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<sup>1</sup> "Thus saith God, Jehovah, who created the heavens, and stretched them out; who spread the earth, and its productions; who gave the spirit of life to the people upon it, and the breath of life to them that walk upon it: I, Jehovah, I have called thee in righteousness, and grasped thy hand; and I keep thee, and make thee the covenant of the people, the light of the Gentiles, to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners out of the prison, them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house." Isaiah 42:5-7 There could hardly be a clearer declaration of the doctrine of divine intervention—both in creation and sustaining of life and intervention in the spiritual condition of a lost humanity

widows in Israel were starving! Remember, this is Israel, not Judah; the northern kingdom which was apostate under Ahab and Jezebel.

**27 And there were many with leprosy in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was [h]cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.”** The same doctrine of divine discretion of time, place, condition and recipient was amplified in the case of Naaman, a Syrian! **28 And all the people in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things;** they denied the scope of Jesus’ mission, envied foreigners and were enraged by favor shown to those they hated. This shows that the case of Jonah was not exceptional. It was a vicious hatefulness in complete opposition to the love and mercy Jesus came to proclaim. **29 and they got up and drove Him out of the city, and brought Him to the [i]crest of the hill on which their city had been built, so that they could throw Him down from the cliff. 30 But He passed through their midst and went on His way.**

There are some take-aways here. First we note that God, not the village folk, is in charge of miracles! Secondly, we note that Jesus kept to the scope of His divinely ordained mission. He was appointed to do five things: a. to bring good news to a lost mankind, a global scope; b. He would do this by ***proclamation—by speaking forth the promises of God, and especially of release from our captivity to sin and death by faith in Him.—proclaiming release*** to all held in captivity to sin, all who were in spiritual bondage, which would mean everyone; c. He would bring recovery of sight to those afflicted with spiritual blindness—such as those who dismissed him because they presumed to know him **after the flesh**, or in worldly ways. It is telling that they frame this in terms of knowing his family, siblings and all, and miss the fact that they are of one flesh with him. They knew, even when they heard him that “men form one united whole as being of the same flesh and blood—that is a core tenet of Jewish messianic thought! They had been taught, based on the very Scriptures that Jesus cited that “they form one family, owing to each other mutual love.” Kindness finds its source in the sense of universal kinship! We tend to think that when Jesus instructed us to love one another, that this was unfamiliar territory. That would be unsubstantiated. The problem is that we prefer dominance and tyranny because our sin nature is inherently **despotic**—we are enraged if anyone tells us what to do, but we are quite content to direct, limit and define what others ought to do. Our divisiveness has deep, selfish roots; d. Jesus came to liberate the oppressed, the enslaved and afflicted. Unfortunately, the Jews took this in a nationalistic sense because they had convinced themselves that they were the victims of Roman oppression and that if the restrictions imposed by these Gentiles were lifted all would be well. But it would not turn out that way. And that goes back to man’s despotic disposition, the ambition to tyrannize others.; e. And, as if in summation, Jesus reiterates that He was sent to **proclaim the Jubilee, the**

**favorable year of the Lord** wherein slaves were freed, debts were cancelled and peace resulted from the restoration of justice.

### Footnotes

- a. Luke 4:21 Lit ears
- b. Luke 4:22 Or testifying
- c. Luke 4:22 Lit words of grace
- d. Luke 4:22 Lit mouth
- e. Luke 4:23 Lit tell me this
- f. Luke 4:25 Lit great
- g. Luke 4:26 Gr Sarepta
- h. Luke 4:27 I.e., healed
- i. Luke 4:29 Lit brow

Jesus' selection of various messianic passages did not unfold in a vacuum. The folks who heard him expand those Scriptures had a considerable background in messianic expectations. They knew that the Messiah would be a **light unto the Gentiles** (Isaiah 49:6d and 42:6c and v.18) This background is proved by Jesus' easy allusions to them! *They presumed familiarity.* But to be delivered from bondage to sin, **such as are slaves to it**, was not their preferred meaning! And that is because of their selfishness and sinful addiction to privilege and power. **To set free those who are oppressed** (Isaiah 58:6), which is verse 18 here leads directly into a discussion of what the Lord requires as **a true fast. It required both an end to selfishness and abstention from sin!** The ancient church kept this sense of the fast alive by connecting fasting with almsgiving—this marriage of self-denial and social duty finds expression in fasting for Oxfam, or Greenpeace which are special interest causes currently. **Loosing the thongs of the yoke** where thongs are sometimes rendered **bundles of writings** (meaning mortgages, promissory notes and bonds—in Jewish usage) should alert the Christian to Christ's abolishing the writings which were against us, oppressing us and condemning us, likens the burden of oxen to the burden or weight of sin which the Messiah would lift.

The gospel account in Mark is brief, and it does not record the content of Jesus' exposition of Isaiah 61:1-2a (with an allusion to Isaiah 58:6 **to let the oppressed go free and break every yoke** which appears to amplify his meaning as rendered in Isaiah 61: 1c: **and the opening of the prison to those who are bound.** This replaces, or expands the meaning of **captives(!)**, and, intriguingly, inserts **recovery of sight for the blind** between **captives** and those **who are oppressed** by imprisonment<sup>2</sup>. The conflation of three allusions from Isaiah 61, 58 and 47 gives a

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<sup>2</sup> Barnes' Notes on the Bible

**To open the blind eyes** - This is equivalent to saying that he would impart instruction to those who were ignorant. It relates to the Jews as well as to the Gentiles. He would acquaint them with God, and with the way of salvation. The condition of the world is often represented as one of darkness and blindness. Men see not their true character; they see not their real condition; they are ignorant

sense of freshness to the Isaiah messianic citation. These belong together now since Jesus chose to conflate them in Nazareth! And this is important for many reasons, not least of which is that *this exposition* addresses Jesus' own mission statement—in which deliverance from all forms of oppression looms very large.

Jesus is like Joseph who preceded him, a ruling/saving type:

**He sent a man before them, even Joseph,  
Who was sold for a servant;  
Whose feet they hurt with fetters;  
He was laid in iron:  
Until the time when his word came,  
The word of the Lord tried him.  
The king sent and loosed him ( וַיִּתְּרֵהוּ vaytîyrêhû),  
Even the ruler of the people, and let him go free. (Psalm 105:17-20)**

And this incident in Nazareth is related to Galatians 3:22: **But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. Firstly, the prison house is our imprisonment by sin<sup>3</sup>.** While many in his audience were *superficially* yearning for liberation from

of God, and of the truths pertaining to their future existence; and they need, therefore, someone who shall enlighten, and sanctify, and save them.

**To bring out the prisoners from the prison** - (Compare [Isaiah 61:1-2](#)). This evidently refers to a spiritual deliverance, though the language is derived from deliverance from a prison. It denotes that he would rescue those who were confined in mental darkness by sin; and that their deliverance from the thralldom and darkness of sin would be as wonderful as if a prisoner should be delivered suddenly from a dark cell, and be permitted to go forth and breathe the pure air of freedom. Such is the freedom which the gospel imparts; nor can there be a more striking description of its happy effects on the minds and hearts of darkened and wretched people (compare [1 Peter 2:9](#)). And again.

### **Matthew Poole's Commentary**

**The blind eyes;** the eyes of their minds blinded with long ignorance, and deep prejudice, and inveterate error, and by the power and policy of the god of this world, [2 Corinthians 4:4](#), which nothing but the almighty power of God could cure.

**The prisoners;** sinners, unto are taken captive by the devil at his will, as we read, [2 Timothy 2:26](#), and as daily experience sheweth, and who are enslaved and chained by their own lusts, and made free-men only by Christ, [John 8:32,36](#). Compare this portion of Scripture with [Isaiah 61:1](#), and both with [Luke 4:17-21](#), where it is said to be fulfilled in and by Christ.

<sup>3</sup> Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible **To open the blind eyes,** ...Of the idolatrous Gentiles, who were spiritually blind, and knew not the wretchedness of their case; the exceeding sinfulness of sin; their need of a Saviour, and who he was; as they did, when their eyes were opened by means of the Gospel sent among them, through the energy of the divine Spirit; for this is a work of almighty power and efficacious grace:

**to bring out the prisoners from the prison;** who were concluded in sin, shut up in unbelief, and under the law, the captives of Satan, and held fast prisoners by him and their own lusts, under the

political oppression— Jesus was addressing the roots of that concern in the depths of the spiritual realm. Sin constitutes our universal prison; it's not political.

**“Concluded all under sin”** is better rendered, “Shut up, taken in the literal sense of confining;” it has nothing to do with inference *as in the conclusion of an argument!* Paul's meaning is “a vast prison-house in which all mankind is confined.” (Maclaren, p. 116) **Under sin** is yet another metaphor which Paul intrudes—the vast dungeon is qualified now as being “a heavy burden.” For those among us familiar with Pilgrim's Progress, this weight is the enormous pack of guilt, shame and sorrow associated with a sin burden! This burden is what falls off Pilgrim at the cross, tumbling down the mountain and disappearing into the tomb, forgotten as in forgiven.

Social justice originates in redemption. Every injustice, all forms of onerous obligation—unjust contracts, enforced indebtedness, mortgages that cannot be paid off—ever, and even slavery is on the table. Messianic expectations impacted each of these. And Jesus came to break every yoke which is formed to introduce poverty, enslavement and, yes, imprisonment is included in his mandate. Now that's a mandate we could all live with. Every yoke but the yoke of Christ—which is Christian liberty—is to be broken off, ended. Jesus is to be our Master, and no one else, or other. And I mention this to establish that our current concerns are not necessarily dated contemporaneously. God has been addressing injustice ever since, and beginning with Christ Jesus.

After Jesus heals a few who were sick—a different conclusion from that in Luke where **passing through their midst** (the angry crowd mobilized to throw him off a cliff), **he went on his way**. Mark records that Jesus sent the twelve out, two by two, with **authority over unclean spirits** so that they went about preaching **repentance** and doing deliverance ministry. And this causes the commotion that attracts King Herod's attention. After relating how John was executed, we come to the feeding of the five thousand, a mighty work, such as he could not do in his hometown due to their unbelief.

**Scripture has driven men** into this prison, this captivity of soul<sup>4</sup>. Not that revelation makes us sinners, but it establishes our spiritual culpability, rendering us

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dominion of which they were: **and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house**: of sin, Satan, and the law; being under which, they were in a state of darkness and ignorance as to things divine and spiritual. The allusion is to prisons, which are commonly dark places. Vtringa, by the "prisoners", understands the Jews shut up under the law; and by those in "darkness" the Gentiles, destitute of all divine knowledge.

<sup>4</sup>Keil and Delitzsch: The attributive participles we have resolved into perfects, because the three first at least declare facts of creation, which have occurred once for all. נוטיהם is not to be regarded as a plural, after [Isaiah 54:5](#) and [Job 35:10](#); but as בורא precedes it, we may take it as a singular with an original quiescent Yod, after [Isaiah 5:12](#); [Isaiah 22:11](#); [Isaiah 26:12](#). On רקע (construct of רקע), see [Isaiah 40:19](#). The ו of וצאצאיה (a word found both in Job and Isaiah, used here in its most direct sense, to signify the vegetable world) must be taken in accordance with the sense, as the Vav of appurtenance; since רקע may be affirmed of the globe itself, but not of the vegetable productions upon it (cf., [Genesis 4:20](#); [Judges 6:5](#); [2 Chronicles 2:3](#)). Neshâmâh and rūäch are

more guilty because it establishes the fact of human sinfulness grimly. However, all that grimness dissipates, is relieved and explained, when the benevolent will of God is discovered—harmonized with God's redeeming love. We are not bound in chains for despair, retribution, punishment or death! A common, woeful destiny. Not at all, we have been imprisoned, gathered together as one in order to receive the blessing of salvation. We are convicted to become convinced of the liberty and light that comes through faith in Jesus Christ, the gift of salvation—unearned, unexpected and un-inherited.

So we have three things: the prison-house, its guardian and its breaker. All sin is imprisonment. Sin is not a treatable psychological condition, it is not obsolete and it is not irrelevant. Those who believe in a "talking cure" will suggest that sin can be reframed therapeutically offering an avenue of escape. Sin is not reducible to "conventional morality." And even if we change the verbiage to read, "biblical morality," we still have the problem of distinguishing biblical morality as a code, from biblical morality as something to live, that grows and transcends itself as life goes on! Often the shift from "conventional morality" to "traditional morality" is made with

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epithets applied to the divine principle of life in all created corporeal beings, or, what is the same thing, in all beings with living souls. At the same time, neshâmâh is an epithet restricted to the self-conscious spirit of man, which gives him his personality (Psychol. p. 76, etc.); whereas rūăch is applied not only to the human spirit, but to the spirit of the beast as well. Accordingly, עַם signifies the human race, as in [Isaiah 40:7](#). What is it, then, that Jehovah, the Author of all being and all life, the Creator of the heaven and the earth, says to His servant here? "I Jehovah have called thee 'in righteousness'" (betsedeq: cf., [Isaiah 45:13](#), where Jehovah also says of Cyrus, "I have raised him up in righteousness"). צַדִּיק, derived from צָדַק, to be rigid, straight, denotes the observance of a fixed rule. The righteousness of God is the stringency with which He acts, in accordance with the will of His holiness. This will of holiness is, so far as the human race is concerned, and apart from the counsels of salvation, a will of wrath; but **from the standpoint of these counsels it is a will of love, which is only changed into a will of wrath towards those who despise the grace thus offered to them.** Accordingly, tsedeq denotes the action of God in accordance with His purposes of love and the plan of salvation. It signifies just the same as what we should call in New Testament phraseology the holy love of God, which, because it is a holy love, has wrath against its despisers as its obverse side, but which acts towards men not according to the law of works, but according to the law of grace. The word has this evangelical sense here, where Jehovah says of the Mediator of His counsels of love, that He has called Him in strict adherence to the will of His love, which will show mercy as right, but at the same time will manifest a right of double severity towards those who scornfully repel the offered mercy. That He had been called in righteousness, is attested to the servant of Jehovah by the fact that Jehovah has taken Him by the hand (וַאֲחֶזְקוֹ contracted after the manner of a future of sequence), and guards Him, and appoints Him עִמּוֹ לְאֹרֹךְ יָמָיו. These words are a decisive proof that the idea of the expression "servant of Jehovah" has been elevated in [Isaiah 42:1](#)., as compared with [Isaiah 41:8](#), from the national base to the personal apex. Adherence to the national sense necessarily compels a resort to artifices which carry their own condemnation, such as that עַם בְּרִית signifies the "covenant nation," as Hitzig supposes, or "the mediating nation," as Ewald maintains, whereas either of these would require עַם בְּרִית; or "national covenant" (Knobel), in support of which we are referred, though quite inconclusively, to [Daniel 11:28](#), where בְּרִית קְדָשׁ *does not mean the covenant of the patriots among themselves, but the covenant religion*, with its distinctive sign, circumcision; or even that עַם is collective, and equivalent to עַמִּים (Rosenmüller), whereas עַם and גּוֹיִם, when standing side by side, as they do here, can only mean Israel and the Gentiles; and so far as the passage before us is concerned, this is put beyond all doubt by [Isaiah 49:8](#) (cf., [Isaiah 42:6](#)).



devastating consequences. “Why shouldn’t I do as I like?” typically defeats morality handily. Surely, if we take morality to be “formed by rules” and as arising from a *narrow prejudice*, or intergenerational envy, instead of viewing it as a well-maintained highway (few bumps, tight curves with warning signs and guard-rails) to facilitate one’s journey through life, there is little to commend morality to those longing to be “free.” What this attitude leaves out is the false comparison between a life of restraint, self-control and duty with “the freedom of living a dissolute life.” If we want to find out how utterly, **he that committeth sin is the slave of sin**, we need only try personal reformation—trying to break it off will soon convince you of your lack of self-mastery! The will is rendered impotent by the sin patterns to which we have become habituated. New Year’s resolutions are a fine testing ground for this premise.!

We do not have to resort to the archaic notion of a prison house—an airport terminal will suffice. Let’s suppose that you have business in a far place that requires, or seems to require your personal presence. You have the option of flying there in addition to virtual encounters such as meeting on your devices (Face Time, or Zooming). But if you elect to fly, you will have to travel to an airport, submit to its procedures and protocols in order to take advantage of air travel. There is a sense of **concluded together** that is more contemporary than a prison setting. There are hundreds of travelers checking in, checking baggage and moving, masked, through security to the gate area where there are dozens of gates, and seating areas and where a diverse group of strangers congregate—all with different goals, objectives and reasons for travel—**concluded together**. An airport is, metaphorically speaking, a model of conventions, customs and protocols which can be extrapolated into a picture of mankind—or, better, a picture of our common human experience. There is a clear sense that “we are all in this together.” Security is a humiliating experience—which reminds us of our common vulnerabilities. Belt-less and shoeless, we connect the risk we are all under (bombs, explosives, hijacking and terrorism?) with vulnerability and common suspicion (screening is pointless if it is not universal). Metal detectors are useless unless everyone submits to their scrutiny. So the airport is a microcosm of the world, and its conventions function as the rules, the moralities we live by. The rules are written, posted and honored—or you do not fly! No one gets away with rejecting them as oppressive, as obsolete, for the sake of personal liberty, or freedom. They may arise from fear and narrow prejudice, but that does not nullify their necessity.

And as for the burden, or **weight of sin**, it is very apparent that luggage at the airport is a metaphorical parallel to what Pilgrim carried on his back! Some travel light and others travel much more encumbered. We almost missed our flight having been rerouted, with little time remaining to get to the gate, to curbside check-in. “There’s no line,” we were told. But between those words, promising a gain in time, and our arrival at curbside, a van transporting four, or five families from Disneyland arrived with fourteen late pieces of luggage (not counting baby strollers!) and we waited twenty minutes to check our two pieces of luggage. It was not *quicker* and we had to race to the gate—after security!—arriving with minutes to spare. All our

margin had been absorbed by the process of getting our luggage on board. If you say, “Well, that was inefficient, and cumbersome,” you would be right. Another baggage handler would have been helpful.

But we still had the protocol to follow! We couldn’t simply reject the conventions as artificial, socially constructed impediments to personal freedom (they were both) and proceed straight to the gate as an expression of liberty and exercise of personal freedom!

In a like manner, we are “slaves to our habits” as we are “slaves to our passions.” “No man is free who is hindered by his lower self from doing what his higher self tells him he ought to do.” (Maclaren, p. 118) In our moral lives, the tempter still comes and suggests: “Try it just this once . . . you can leave off when you like; you know, there is no need to do it again . . . shouldn’t you try anything once? You don’t want to miss out, do you? See how many others are doing it, enjoying it!” And when you have done it, his tune changes, “*You are in now*, and you cannot get out . . . once is twice, and twice is “many times” . . . and that is as to say always.” Stay in line, wear your mask and show your approved ID and boarding pass. (There’s an old Irish saying that goes “A **man takes a drink**, the drink takes a **drink**, the **drink** takes the **man**.” Much moral depravity follows these lines, even with those who didn’t start off to get drunk! Or addicted! We enslave ourselves by the habits we form, good or bad—repetition forges our “chains.”)

Guilt is not necessarily a bad thing. Good guilt alerts us to transgression, highlights our imperfections. *And this is because all human acts have perpetual consequences*. The rifle kicks, the chalk cliffs of Dover “perpetuate the myriads” of microbial life, their existence perpetuated in the accumulation of skeletal remains! “So our fleeting deeds are preserved in our present selves. Everything that a man wills, *whether it passes into external act or not*, leaves in its measure, ineffaceable impressions on himself.” (Maclaren, p. 119) We do, in some sense, self-create—we are the summation of our experience, the expression of our choices, our definitive past. The evil that we do persists and we cannot blame shift it out of existence, we cannot deny our own reality, however painful or joyful though it may be. If we want to fly we must enter the airport; we must do some things to get somewhere *and morality functions very much like that*. This transcends social determination, this relativizes convention. If we say the past is prelude, we come closer to its true relevance. We are not merely what our *circumstances dictate*. What we do with what we are dealt matters much more than what life serves up to us.

And beyond this life there looms a future—a future of accountability in which “plausible deniability” evaporates. Yes, we are all in an airport and we are all on a journey. “No man is, or has been, does, or has done that which his own conscience tells him he should have been or done”—we have all fallen short, we have faults in general, and in particular. And we are all in a personal relationship to a personal Creator God who made us moral to be moral and that in the positive sense, meaning, to will, and to choose good rather than evil. Here is a soccer card, there is



a record and it is divinely tabulated. “All imperfections, faults, negligences, shortcomings, and, still more, transgression of moral, or of the higher aspirations of our lives, **are sins.**” . . . “the deeds which in regard to the law may be crimes, or those which in regard to morality may be vices, or in regard to our own convictions of duty may be shortcomings, seeing they all have some reference to Him, assume a very much graver character, **and they are all sins.**” (Maclaren p. 120)

Why? Because we are intimately and inseparably knit to God—**we are his people and the sheep of his pasture**—and eternally so, if the last judgment does not sever that relationship! “All our faults are transgressions of His law.” This runs deeper than known sins; it more inclusive and universal. King David sinned against many people—but it was his conviction of sinning against God in all of that, that he came to heartfelt repentance. That is our condition even if we are not royalty in the earthly sense. **ALL have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God**, as it is written. The Holy Spirit is the guardian of our airports, our lives—or, of the prison houses that we construct for ourselves.

However, all of this dreadfulness, all of this grimness, Paul states has a benevolent purpose! We are gathered that we might be delivered! Yes, while one great purpose of Scripture is to convince us we are sinful in God’s sight, and the role of the Holy Spirit is too convict us of that condition, *and that through both we might be schooled in what is right and wrong*—for that knowledge is neither natural, or native to us—our condition is a set-up for the **gift of salvation**. We tend to take offense at the protocols of God, especially as they appear objectively in the world and in the word. And we tend to look to personal conscience to do for us what it can never do—*for as we change and grow, our conscience also changes*. “A man’s whole state determines the voice with which the conscience shall speak to him, so the worse he is, and the more he needs is the less he has!” ( Maclaren, p.123) The rebel within takes down the internet, and several the cables of communication—we numb our consciences out by the very sins that we commit.

- We revert to spiritual complacency, or levity, or to sheer unwillingness to take honest stock of ourselves. Men loved the darkness echoes this dishonesty.
- We actually construct the wall, between ourselves and our loving God; shutting out grace, redemption and repudiating the forgiveness proffered.

Have we forgotten that the Gospel is addressed to sinful men? That coming as penitent sinners, and casting ourselves on the mercy of God in the Lord Jesus is the best, the only way forward? Forward to our final destination? The Scripture has herded us hence, to the place where He might display his mercy most widely? Into the fold, and out to the pastures. He creates in us a longing for deliverance. That is the face of guilt so often hidden from us! The plain truth is necessary, howsoever unpleasant it might be. Sin is our captivity. Jesus came to address that condition:

**18     “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,  
           Because He anointed Me to bring good news to the poor.  
           He has sent Me to proclaim release to captives,**

**And recovery of sight to the blind, (Isaiah 42:7)**  
**To set free those who are oppressed, (Isaiah 58:6)**  
**19 To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.”**

The prison is opened by the death of Jesus. He proclaimed liberty to those who would believe. And those who come out, come out into sunshine—like the sunshine that reigns at 38,000 feet! “Since all is done for each of us, and since none of us can do sufficient for himself to break the bond, then what we should do is to trust Him who has broken every chain and let the oppressed go free. (Maclaren, p.125) Oh, that everyone would start at the beginning, with a sense of dependent need and their sin, and look to Christ for *cleansing, healing, help and liberation*. Then would your faith be precious! Then would your light shine. Evangelism would seem more a game of “Capture the Flag,” and less of a fearful burden. You, who are free, were freed to assist others in their escape to freedom! Yes, He is the One who opens the door. But you are invited to help the process. It is so much fun to win others to Christ. Ask those who’ve already done it.

Amen.