

## Beacons of the Bible

### The Raven

By [Henry Law](#)

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"He sent forth a raven, which went forth to and fro, until the waters were dried up from off the earth."--Genesis 8:7

Blessed are they, who find their constant pleasure-ground in the luxuries of the Bible! They commune with the mind of God. They listen to a heavenly voice. They bask in rays of purest light. They feed in wholesome pastures of refreshment. They fear no poison from the weeds of error. No devious path can lead their steps astray. Wisdom from above guides sweetly them. The Spirit, as high Teacher of the Church, instructs the students. They advance safely, happily, from grace to grace.

The lessons are vast, as the mine from which they spring. They are pure, as the realms to which they call. They warn of sin--its filth--its misery--its end. They unfold Jesus in all the glories of redeeming love. They exhibit holiness, as the road to holy heaven.

Reader! heed a salutary admonition. Study the Bible, as holding treasure for your soul. Study in the earnestness of prayer. Study with eternity outspread before you. Study with the lowliness of a poor sinner before a speaking God. Study with faith devoutly grasping every word. Close not the volume without inquiring, "Is sin more hateful--the world more worthless--the flesh more treacherous in my sight? Is Jesus brought nearer to my adoring soul? Is my heart won to more entire devotedness? Am I more resolute to live for Him, who died for me?" The lively word should thus give life.

But this teaching is more than mighty in its matter. It is attractive in its varied mode. It charms by inexhaustible diversity. It summons all creation to its service. It traverses the universe of things alive and lifeless. It uses all their stores, as handmaids to profounder truth.

A few flowers, culled from this spacious garden, will illustrate this. It looks above, and from the wonders of the skies brings testimony to Redemption's nobler work. The *orb of day* proclaims the Sun of Righteousness. The glory of the lovely light is typically significant of "the true light." "I am the light of the world--he that

follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." John 8:12. The glittering *star* has a Gospel-voice. "I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star." Rev. 22:16.

It looks to the earth, and Christ is seen throughout the countless produce. The stately tree--the fragrant flower--the flowing stream--the living stone--the riches of the mine, and all the length and breadth of its immensities, call us to adore "the chief among ten thousand."

So, also, the world of animal life inculcates thoughts of highest import. The lion, ruling the forest in his might--the ox, not ignorant of its owner--the donkey, quick to discern its master's crib--the washed swine returning to the mire--the gentle flocks reposing in the meadows--the goats cast out from the fold, and other tribes, warn by their peculiar characteristics. Each seems to say, 'Immortal souls may harvest deep profit by observing me.'

Among these monitors the *feathered* creation occupies its place. To each of this class some specialty belongs. These different species are not given in vain. The mind, which framed their diverse instincts, writes on each some admonition.

Sometimes the lesson is distinctly drawn. Sometimes nothing but the habit of the winged one is stated. The reader is left to ponder it in meditative prayer.

Such is the case of the first bird named in sacred annals. Its notice is brief. It appears when the waters of the deluge were partially assuaged. Noah had been told by God what God alone could tell. The coming of this ruin had been distinctly announced beforehand. No human means could ascertain when thus the floodgates of heaven would open, and all the fountains of the great deep be broken up. This then was taught by a revealing voice. But God fixed not the moment of *departure* from the ark. Deity instructs sufficiently, but not superfluously. What reasoning powers can discover, no inspiration will unfold. When ordinary means suffice, no miracle will interfere. Noah by natural resource must learn, when earth again shall be dry ground.

He seeks aid from the winged inhabitants of the ark. He selects the Raven. He sends it forth on embassy of observation. "Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made, and he sent forth a raven." Genesis 8:6. In vain he waited. There was no return. It brought no tidings. Its wings beat not again against the window of its departure. It sought no more admission into its former shelter. "It went forth to and fro." It wandered up and down. It found some resting-places perhaps on the loftiest crags of the reappearing mountains. It was content to perch on any height. It was well pleased to feed on any floating carrion. It cared not where it perched, or where it gained support, so long as it had no restraint. It left the ark, pleased to escape. It left the ark, never to re-enter.

My soul, mark well this wandering RAVEN. It gives a warning. It speaks of

disappointment. Noah expected its return with tale of earth's revival. But it came not back. It cheered him not with an assurance that the destroying waters were assuaged--and desolation's reign was past. It gave not the solace of abated ruin. It never said, 'Go forth--walk up and down in peace--peril has ceased--earth is again a dry abode.'

From all the streams of teaching flowing from this spring, let that be heard which is most vitally instructive. Let us then first observe an allegoric emblem of the Moral LAW. Doubtless no such lesson is primarily designed. But profit may be incidentally deduced, when not originally meant. The soul intent on holy growth, may gather flowers in a field tilled to render other crop.

It is sadly true, that many turn to the Law for life--for peace--for righteousness. But can its voice proclaim these blessings? It is, indeed, an ordinance--godlike in majesty, sublimity, and truth. It is seated on a glorious throne. It is a picture of Jehovah's mind. It shows the lineaments of His eternal essence. It is wondrous in brevity--infinite in extent. Love is the substance of its whole requirement. Love shines, as the dazzling crown upon its brow. Love is the one channel of its course. But still it is so boundlessly expansive, that its wide arms embrace each thought--each word--each work of all, who ever trod, or shall tread, earth.

It announces, that deviation from pure Love is utter abomination in God's sight. It points to heaven and cries, 'Love is the one atmosphere of that bright home. Nothing breathes there but Love.' It stands as a guard before the shining portals. It drives back all transgressors of its grand enactment.

View now the sinner's breast, when penetrated by the Spirit's light. Conscience instantly accuses of transgressions--as many as the moments of existence--towering high as mountains piled on mountains--extending in multitude, as all the sands of ocean's shore--embodied in each act--sounding in each word--staining each thought. Will the Law draw softly near, and wipe away all tears, and silence fears? Will it bid gloom to disappear? Will it diffuse the calm of heavenly peace? Will it show wrath appeased--and vengeance satisfied--and deathful weapons laid aside? Far otherwise. The Raven brought no happy tidings. The Law can tell no tale of comfort. It leaves the soul in deepest cells of uttermost despair. It pays no soothing visits. It has no cheering note. It has no messages of reconciliation. It raises not from terror's agonizing depths. It only affrights with its inexorable threats. It thunders, 'Give me my due. Pay the full debt contracted by offence.' But the insolvent cannot pay. Therefore the curse must fall. Thus it inflicts banishment from God--exclusion from the realms of blessedness--consignment to the prison-house of hell. Thus it piles anguish upon anguish, which never can relax, until the ages of eternity shall cease.

Reader! study the Law profoundly. Ponder its breadth--its length--its depth--its height. Gaze with open eye upon its perfect purity. Mark well its large and just requirements. Realize your own infinite shortcoming. See your whole life one

mass of violation. Mark, how it fastens condemnation on you. View its high barrier, excluding you from heaven. Weigh its strong chain, dragging you to hell. Take the inevitable truth. It has no word of peace. It never pardons. It gives not life. It surely dooms to death. Expect not help from it. No, flee far from it. If you escape not, it will surely slay you. The Raven cheered not the inhabitants of the ark. The Law brings no relief.

Noah, disappointed, sends forth another messenger. The DOVE speeds her gentle way. She tarries not. She soon relieves the anxious fears. Her welcome wings are heard again. Joy brightens at her glad return "When the dove returned to him in the evening, there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf! Then Noah knew that the water had receded from the earth." Genesis 8:11

This leaf relates a happy story. The waters are abated. The destroying element has subsided. Peril has fled away. Security again smiles. The detaining doors may now be opened. Earth is again verdant. Solid ground invites returning steps. Let now thanksgivings rise. Let praise ascend. Let man reoccupy his renovated home.

Here is a lovely emblem of our GOSPEL! What the Law announces not, is sweetly published by glad tidings from above. Welcome, thrice welcome news resound from heaven. Floods upon floods of joy unspeakable issue from Zion's heights. Full salvation is revealed. On earth peace, good-will toward men, are gloriously proclaimed.

Hearken, O children of men. Give ear, my soul. Would that all earth's sons, from East--from West--from North--from South, could be the audience! Would that all might hear the faithful sayings of the blessed Gospel! Christ is the first and last--the sum and substance of this noble word. Christ--chosen--sent--anointed--accepted of God. Christ--wondrous in His person--the mighty God--therefore infinitely glorious to save. Christ--very man, therefore entirely qualified to represent the family of Adam. Christ--loving from everlasting to everlasting, with love knowing no origin--no end--no intermission--no degrees--with love always unchangeably the same--perfect--pure--intense--enduring. Christ--hanging on the accursed tree--laying down His life a sufficient ransom-price--by His blood closing the gates of hell--quenching God's fiery wrath--paying all demands--satisfying every claim--glorifying every attribute--washing out each crimson-stain of all His ransomed flock. Christ--gloriously fulfilling every iota of the glorious Law--saying to each command, 'I fully have obeyed'; and then transferring the vicarious obedience, as divine righteousness, to His bride the Church--her robe for heaven--her luster in the courts above.

Christ--purchasing the Holy Spirit, and sending Him to bless the Church with all His powers to teach--to sanctify--to comfort--to adorn--to beautify. Christ--rising from the grave, a proof, that God is satisfied--and all redemption fully earned--a pledge, that the ransomed in their turn shall put on the beauties of a resurrection

body, worthy of a resurrection-state. Christ--ascending to the right hand of the majesty on high, representing all His people in Himself--bearing their names upon His shoulders and His heart--receiving all gifts for them--pouring down all blessings on them. Christ--coming to institute a glorious reign--to change the living--to raise the dead--to execute eternal judgment--to fill all heaven with glory--to awaken the eternal song of never-ending hallelujahs.

O my soul, what a flood of tidings of great joy! Spring forth to welcome them. Stretch forth your arms to clasp them. The Law frowns condemnation. The Gospel thus smiles salvation. The wrath is gone. Destruction's billows are no more seen. Dismiss all fears. Annihilate your shivering doubts. Tremble no more. Open the gates of liberty. Go forth, as Noah, upon the renovated earth. Walk up and down in the green pastures of delight. See all around you verdant and redolent of peace. Enjoy. Give thanks. Lift up the voice. Sing praises. All things are yours--the world--things present--things to come--all are yours--and you are Christ's--and Christ is God's. 1 Cor. 3:21-23.

Following the Gospel-voice, we dwell as lords of a wide universe of peace. We lie down in green pastures--we feed beside still waters. The hand of love makes full provision. Goodness and mercy follow our steps, as the attending shadow. This Gospel flies from heaven, assuring us, that God, even our own God, shall bless us. Thus, like Noah's dove, it calls us forth to liberty and joy. All glory to the Gospel of free grace! All glory to the Gospel of eternal life!

But mark again the *Raven*. We may learn much from its *departing* flight. Without unduly giving wings to imagination, we may here trace silly worldlings in their silly ways. To such, the Gospel-ark is not a welcome home. Its holy boundaries are uncongenial. They flee its pious inhabitants. They shun its righteous shelter. The easy yoke galls, as an enfettering chain. The light burden is as a heavy bondage. They give the wing to their unbridled passions. They are carried away by wild desires--and craving appetites--and raging lusts. Their feet speed hastily from spots, where Christ is the one testimony--where God is lovingly adored--where eternity in vivid colors is brought near.

O my soul, take warning. Make the Gospel-ark your constant dwelling-place--your much-loved home--your safe retreat--your all-protecting shelter. Dwell in Christ, and Christ in you. Abide in Him, and He in you. Nestle sweetly--rest securely--in the screening refuge of His wounds. Stray not away from Him.

There is a beacon, also, in the Raven's restlessness. It wanders to and fro, and never settles. Worldlings wandering from Christ find no repose. Tossed up and down, they lead a weary life. Hurried here and there, they are strangers to all peace. Some vain allurements offer rest. They seek it only to take early flight. Another spot invites. It promises much, and disappoints the more. Behold the fretting waters of the troubled sea. They represent the constant motion of the unfixed mind. Thus always craving--never satisfied--the weary votaries of earth

drag out their uncalm days.

O my soul, have you found Christ? The true believer sweetly sings, "I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste." Song 2:3. Shall God say of *Zion*, "This is my rest forever; here will I dwell; for I have desired it?" Ps. 132:14. And will not you respond, *Christ* is indeed my rest forever? Nothing shall tempt me from my home of joy.

The Raven's food erects another beacon. What nourishment could it find in the drowned waste? What, but the putrid remnants of the floating carcasses? Thus worldlings starve their souls amid the husks and carrion of their pleasures! Their maxims are false, and therefore poisonous. No wholesome nutriment is there. Their cup of joy at best is flavorlessness. Contrast the banquet-house of faith. The WORD luxuriantly contains supplies to cheer--to strengthen--to refresh. The PROMISES, what animating cordials. The truths of the CROSS, what a well-stored table! Jesus is the bread of life. The soul partakes and lives. The prospect of the HEAVENLY REST, what a rich feast! "Eat, O friends--drink, yes drink abundantly, O beloved." The LOVE OF CHRIST, how invigorating! "Your love is better than wine."

Reader! be always a guest at this table, and "eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness."

If any worldling should peruse this page, may his eye turn not again to that poor cheat, the world. May it look to Christ, and never look away! He is sure rest. He is safe refuge. He is *a treasury of all delights*. He satisfies, until the full soul can hold no more.

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