

The Nature of Divine Provocation

*Yea, when they had made them a molten calf, and said, This is thy God that brought thee up out of Egypt, and had wrought great **provocations**; (Neb 9:18)*

*Nevertheless they were disobedient, and rebelled against Thee, and cast Thy law behind their backs, and slew Thy prophets which testified against them to turn them to Thee, and they wrought great **provocations**. (Neb 9:26)*

*Harden not your heart, as in the **provocation**, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: (Ps 95:8)*

*While it is said, To day if ye will bear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the **provocation**. (Heb 3:15)*

This chapter addresses a vital revelation given to me from the LORD through my husband regarding the nature of Divine provocation. Upon the granting of this revelation, a former mindset was discarded, and a means to faithfulness in the bridling of the tongue in the midst of manifold temptation was given to me. So soul-preserving, peace-enduing, and power-bestowing was this revelation, that it is much needful for me to convey this revelation as an entire chapter. For this revelation is unto the fear of the LORD, and blessed is the one that fears the LORD, while always hoping in His mercy, that peculiar woman who fears the LORD, for surely she shall be praised (Ps 128:4, Prov 31:30)! The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever (Ps 19:9)!

Promises to those who fear the LORD:

- The secret of the LORD is with them (Ps 25:14)
- The eye of the LORD is upon them (Ps 33:18)
- The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them (Ps 34:7)
- There is no want to them (Ps 34:9)
- They are pitied as a father pitieth his children (Ps 103:13)
- The mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting to them (Ps 103:17)
- The LORD takes pleasure in them (Ps 147:11)
- Their days are prolonged (Prov 10:27)
- Their fear of the LORD the beginning of wisdom (Prov 9:10)
- Their fear of the LORD is a fountain of life (Prov 14:27)

- Their fear tendeth to life (Prov 19:23)
- By their fear of the LORD and humility are riches, honour, and life (Prov 22:4)

Until I had this revelation I was under the impression that it was sinful thoughts, meditations, inclinations, desires, and longings within the heart that were the cause of great provocation to the LORD. Thus, I did not understand the wrath-provoking nature of the unbridled tongue and body. I deemed that the moment that sin entered my heart, all was lost, in that moment at the very least, and thus whether I were to speak or act rashly upon the sin within my heart was of none effect in the sight of God compared to if I were quiet. That is to say, I never considered that it indeed would provoke the eyes of His glory far more were I to speak my thoughts in rashness, in hopeless despair, in a complete abrogation of the care for the offense caused to the generation of the righteous, than if I, in the fear of the LORD, bridled my tongue, though the wickedness had already entered my conscious thought.

The revelation which I seek to describe in this chapter is this: the LORD is greatly provoked at the unbridling of the tongue and body, even compared to the sinful inclinations present within the heart. This is to say: the LORD is provoked, yes, when sin enters the heart, but He is far more provoked when the soul speaks out from the abundance of these lusts, or when the body commits rash deeds out from the abundance of these lusts. For as our LORD has said “*out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh*”. (Luke 6:45) He does not say “whatever enters the heart will be spoken”, but rather that out of the abundance, or overflow, or excess, of the heart his mouth speaks. Sin must reach a certain level, what the Scripture calls “abundance”, before it will cause a man to speak. By the time this level has been reached, the man has dispensed with the fear of the LORD, and the man has refused to believe that there is a “way to escape” that he may stand under temptation (1 Cor 10:13). Thus, the man has called God as “a liar”, he has hardened his heart against his solid hope, and he has given up faith that the LORD will come to his deliverance. Thus, he speaks his thoughts and commits his meditations in utter rashness. Thus the Proverb says, “*a fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards*” (Prov 29:11)

Consider the great example of divine provocation: the temptations of the Israelites in the desert. These were they who were under the cloud, and passed through the sea, and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; those who did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. (1 Cor 10:1-4). How was He their Rock, their Spiritual meat and drink? He was their Savior, and in all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old. (Is 63:8-9) The temptations that they experienced, the afflictions in which He too was afflicted were primarily those of being in the desert. The LORD humbled them by allowing them to go through periods of time during which their physical necessities and desires were withheld. He withheld food and water for short periods of time. Yet it was in His will to provide these in due time for to them was the promise also applied: seek first His kingdom, and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto them (Matt 6:33). King David was young, and when he was old he declared that he had

not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread (Ps 37:25)! Yet, in the days during whether these were withheld, he humbled them, and suffered them to hunger, and fed them with manna, which they knew not, neither did their fathers know, that He might make them know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live. (Deut 8:3) Other temptations were the indefinite wait while Moses was upon the Mount Sinai receiving the Mosaic law which resulted in their apostasy with the golden calf, and the physical desire for meat, for the foods of Egypt... During these temptations, the withholding either of physical desires or needs, their faith was greatly tried, and indeed a way of escape should have been granted to them had they confessed their sins, the lusts of their eyes and flesh and pride of life, before the LORD, and cried out for mercy, for a Spiritual deliverance, lest sin reach peak levels in the heart, the Biblical "abundance" be reached, and the mouth utter forth the murmurings which led to their death and reprobation. Oh dear sisters, they had a way of escape in the midst of these manifold afflictions and temptations. For our God has promised, "*there hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it*" (1 Cor 10:13). But these who displeased the LORD rebelled, and vexed His Holy Spirit: therefore He was turned to be their enemy, and He fought against them. (Is 63:10). Thus were they overthrown in the wilderness: for their lust after evil things, their idolatry in sitting down to eat and drink, and rising to play, their committing of fornication, their tempting of Christ, their murmuring...these things resulted in them being overthrown, in falling, in being destroyed of serpents, of being destroyed by the destroyer... (1 Cor 10:5-10). All these manifestations of sin are given in Scripture, which also declares that all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. (1 Cor 10:11). Surely these manifestations of sin began in the heart, where they were drawn away of their own lusts and enticed; lust conceived and brought forth sin; sin conceived and brought forth death. (James 1:14-15). Yet the pathway from lust to enticement to the conception of sin to their death was not a path of no return, that is, there at the very lust itself, yes, even at the enticement of their flesh, their remained a way of escape that sin need not have been conceived. For it was when sin was conceived that the LORD killed them. Therefore, the Scripture warns against the unbridled mouth and the unbridled heart which results in outward commission of sin. So we are told to mortify therefore our members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: for **which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience**: in the which we also walked some time, when we lived in them. But now we are also to put off all thee; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of our mouth, to lie not one to another, seeing we have put of the old man with his deed; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him. (Col 3:5-10)

Dear sisters, there is a pathway from lust and enticement within the heart, to outward manifestations of sin which provoke the LORD even unto death, if He be repeatedly and utterly provoked thereby. The outward manifestations of sin are exhibited when lust and enticement are not restrained, when the way of escape is willingly not sought after, hoped for, and found, the fear of the LORD is absent, the man succumbs to the spirit of the antichrist, and sin is conceived. When sin is

conceived and sin in word (the unbridled tongue) or deed (the unbridled body) are committed, the LORD is exceedingly provoked beyond His provocation by the lusts within the heart themselves. For surely there would have been a way of escape provided to the struggling saint had he called upon the name of the LORD, had he come boldly to the throne of grace to find mercy and grace in his time of need! Surely we do have a high Priest who is able to be touched by the feeling of our infirmities who would succor us, who would save us to the uttermost when we come to God through Him!

¹¹ Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. ¹² Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. ¹³ There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. ¹⁴ Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry. (1 Cor 10:11-14)

Indeed for a soul buffeted by many afflictions and temptations, when faith is maintained in a worthy measure, the man believes that there is a way of escape. For the deepest desire and longing in his heart is to please his Master, to willingly perform the will of the Master, to remain with God. Yes, surely for him it is good to draw near to God: he has put his trust in the LORD God, that he may declare all His works (Ps 73:28); when his heart and flesh faileth: God is the strength of his heart, and his portion forever (Ps 73:26)! Surely he trusts that his life is sustained by the WORD of God, and not by bread only! Surely he believes that his God will save him, bring him into the light, and he will behold His righteousness once more! His heart's cry is "*Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him: but I will maintain my own ways before Him*" (Job 13:15), "*I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me*" (Ps 39:1), and "*set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips*" (Ps 141:3). In the most fierce temptation and agony of the flesh they are as Daniel's companions who said "*If it so be, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.*" (Dan 3:17-18). He had come to learn the wisdom that to suffer in the flesh is to cease from sin (1 Pet 4:1, see chapter 10)!

Furthermore, the fear of LORD is grounded and rooted within the bridled man's heart. He understands some worthy glimpse of the holiness of His tabernacle, the unapproachableness of His heavenly presence! Thus, it is unthinkable to him to pour forth the waste bin of the moral filth of his soul before the face of God with rashness of speech and deed! Oh He is so holy, beloved sisters, and we would do well to cover our shame before Him, to be as Noah's sons who covered their father's shame! For the wise know that surely His eyes and ears are upon the righteous and their prayers, yet His face is turned aside from them that do and speak evil! For if any man among us seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain (Jam 1:26)! So the Scripture declares:

¹⁰ For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: ¹¹ Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it. ¹² For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. (1 Pet 3:10-

Yet for the righteous, those who remain in a perfect state before Him it is spoken, “*For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body*” (Jam 3:2). Surely the righteous are not devoid of any sinful lusts and temptations at any time, for in many things we offend *all*. Yet the wise do not offend in word, in the rashness of the tongue. Consider again, the infamous and inherent nature of the tongue from this passage:

³*Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body.*⁴*Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth.*⁵*Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. **Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth!***⁶***And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell.***⁷*For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind*⁸***But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. (James 3:3-8)***

Beloved sisters, if we are wise we will take heed to these truths: that the tongue left to itself, that is unbridled, un-ruled by the Spirit and mind of Christ within the saint, is inherently a little fire that kindleth great matters, a fire, a world of iniquity, a defiler of the whole body, an object that sets on fire the course of nature, and IT IS SET ON FIRE OF HELL! It is untamable by the strength of man; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison! It is unthinkable to the wise to give the tongue free reign! Surely by these descriptions we can understand that damnation for many would await!

⁹*Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God.*¹⁰*Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be.*¹¹*Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter?*¹²*Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine, figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.*¹³*Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.*¹⁴*But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.*¹⁵*This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish.*¹⁶*For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.*¹⁷*But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.*¹⁸*And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace. (James 3:9-18)*

Finally, dear sisters, when the tongue is unbridled, the LORD is provoked because we do offend against the generation of His children! In closing consider and meditate upon the temptation and struggle of Asaph:

¹*Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.*

²*But as for me, **my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped.***

³*For I was **envious at the foolish**, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.*

⁴*For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm.*

⁵*They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men.*

⁶*Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment.*

⁷Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish.

⁸They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily.

⁹They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth.

¹⁰Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them.

¹¹And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High?

¹²Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches.

¹³Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency.

¹⁴For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.

¹⁵If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children.

¹⁶When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me;

¹⁷Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.

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(Ps 73:1-17)

Asaph's Lusts and Enticements: he was envious of the foolish because of their earthly prosperity

Asaph's Spiritual Danger: his feet were almost gone, his steps had well nigh slipped

Asaph's Temptation to Speak: "*Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning*"

Asaph's Bridling of his Tongue in the Fear of God: "*If I say, I will speak thus behold, I should offend against the generation of Thy children*"...when he thought to know this it was too painful for him!

God's Way of Escape to Asaph: Asaph entered God's sanctuary and understood their end!

Oh beloved sisters, I beg you to understand: in the midst of raging storms of temptation, if we would but humble ourselves and bear the pain, the agony of the flesh, and put a bridle upon our mouths and bodies in the fear of the LORD, not in hypocrisy, but in holy terror at the awareness of His holy gaze, He would surely, in due time, come speedily to our aid and restore unto us glorious peace and sweet rest, resounding praise upon our lips for great are His deliverances! Yet were we to abrogate His fear and speak the rashness of our souls, and commit rash deeds, we provoke the LORD of glory immensely, and we are set much far back from our course upon this narrow way. And it will be with much contrition and sorrow that we will regain our footing by His grace. If we would but trust Him and wait for His deliverance, He will bring us onward by His own hand, leading us in pastures of tender grass and by quiet waters. Surely goodness and mercy would follow us all of our days and we will dwell in the house of the LORD forever! Amen!

*Here I stand amidst manifold temptation
What I do henceforth will result in glory or provocation
Raging lusts for survival, pleasure, and self-glory do buffet my soul
Will I be dragged away and enticed by passions without Christ's control?
Were I to lose faith, to harden my heart to His voice
To declare to my soul, "I must sin, I have no choice"
Then would I the fear of the LORD dispense
And then from His saving tender mercy He would justly relent
I would be as the Israelites who murmured, and committed idolatry unto death
For the SWORD upon His holy side, He would surely whet
Thus were they destroyed of the Destroyer
If sin was conceived, and flesh had its way, there would before His throne be no worthy lawyer
So though I stand here tried and much afflicted
I will by His holy presence for my lusts be convicted
And so will I strive to yield my all unto Him
Who provides my way of escape from the conception of sin
I will call upon His name for mercy
So shall I be saved from the enemies of my soul with divine surety
For He truly does give grace to the humble, to the poor man who cries
That I may to His holy presence be forever tied*