

I. Introduction:

- A. I checked my records and discovered that we began our study of **Proverbs** in April 2017.
 - 1. After 2 months short of 3 years we have completed a brief survey of that great book, skimming its surface.
 - 2. I hope that it has been as helpful, and as much a blessing, to you as it has been to me.
 - 3. In 2 weeks time, while I am at the conference in Canada, Bro. Fulton will begin a new series.
 - 4. We will let the Lord determine its length, but it probably won't be as long as **Proverbs**.
 - 5. But in the mean time, since this is our Prayer Meeting, I'd like to bring you a few thoughts about prayer.
- B. Several months ago I was reading a rather unusual book by C.H. Spurgeon.
 - 1. Nearly everything of his that I have read, before this book, has either been short devotions, as in **Morning and Evening** or **Faith's Checkbook**, or it has been a compilation of sermons on particular subjects.
 - 2. But this book was specifically written as a lengthy book – a study of **Prayer and Spiritual Warfare**.
 - 3. One chapter caught my attention, and I jotted its theme down in my notebook for future consideration. And the future is now.
 - 4. The thought was originally the Lord's; Spurgeon highlighted it; but this message is Oldfield's.

II. God CARES about RAVENS, He EMPLOYS ravens, and He HEARS the prayers of ravens.

- A. Including in this scripture, these birds are mentioned 10 times – 90% of the time in the Old Testament
 - 1. In the one New Testament verse, the Lord Jesus says, **“Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them...” – Luke 12:24.**
 - 2. He then goes on – **“Are not ye much more important than fowls generally and ravens in particular?”**
- B. In the Old Testament ravens are mentioned several times as bearing only baby ravens, never doves or eagles.
 - 1. And their first mention is when one of them left Noah's Ark never to return.
 - 2. It apparently fledged some baby ravens out there in the world, and their species remained, because a few millennia later God ordered some of them to feed Elijah during a time of famine.
 - 3. **“The ravens brought him bread & flesh in the morning, & bread & flesh in the evening...” – I Kings 17:6.**
 - 4. Then Job, like Jesus, spoke of God's feeding those ravens.
 - 5. Along with some other comments here and there, our text says, Jehovah **“giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry.”**
- C. Following Bro. Spurgeon's example, I'm going to consider **verse 9** and the baby raven's squawking as his prayer to God.
 - 1. I know this is a stretch. Because the naturalist wouldn't agree.
 - 2. For a couple years, I had a link on my computer to cameras over the nests of both Peregrine Falcons in Calgary and some Osprey in Sandpoint.
 - a. I saw that usually those baby birds were perfectly silent – until their parents were in the area.
 - b. Once they heard or saw mom or dad, then they would begin to holler and fuss until they were fed.
 - 3. I know it could be argued that those nestlings were screaming only to their parents.
 - 4. But I think we have Biblical grounds to at least make an application of their cries as unto God.
 - 5. And if we do that, then we can also make application to prayers generally – our prayers.
 - 6. **“Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them...”**
 - 7. **“How much more are ye better than the fowls?” – Luke 12:24.**

III. How is this an encouragement to us to pray?

- A. Have you ever felt unworthy of addressing the Lord?
 - 1. Have you ever thought of yourself as undeserving of God's blessing, so not even good enough to pray?
 - 2. The angels around God's throne cry out, **“Holy, holy, holy,”** and they are essentially holy themselves.
 - 3. But you and I are far from the character of angels.

4. We know that live in bodies of flesh and weakness.
5. We know that we are naturally wicked, and usually, we have recently sinned against our Lord.
6. Who are we to cry unto God?

B. I point you to the ravens.

1. I have not yet forgotten the trip Judy and I made with the Kjeldgaards to Colorado for the organization of the Victory Baptist Church.
 - a. On our way back we made a quick tour through Yellowstone, capturing some unforgettable memories.
 - b. One of which was stopping at a shop where some ravens were entertaining and begging for food.
 - c. Those were some really intelligent birds; they knew exactly how to manipulate the crowd.
2. But clearly, despite their intelligence, they were not praying to God.
3. It is not brains; it is not education; it is not physical strength or attainments which drive men to prayer.
4. And you do not have to be heavenly seraphim to pray.
5. All you need is need and a humble heart to know your need and to seek the Lord.

C. *Leviticus* and *Deuteronomy* state that ravens produce ravens, just as vultures produce baby vultures.

1. But the context is a bit more specific – *“And these are they which ye shall have in ABOMINATION among the fowls; they shall not be eaten, they are an abomination: the eagle, and the ossifrage, and the ospray, and the vulture, and the kite after his kind; every raven after his kind.”*
2. The point is that Elijah was fed for several weeks, by the command of God, by an unclean bird.
3. The man who picked up a raven chick which had fallen from its nest, was ceremonially unclean and could not enter God’s tabernacle until certain specific things were done to cleanse him.
4. And yet – and yet – the Lord *“giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry.”*
5. The point is – when the Holy Spirit lays upon your heart some burden, pointing you to the throne of grace, go ahead and cry out to the Lord.
6. Don’t condemn or silence yourself by dwelling on your sins when the Lord invites you to join Him.
7. *“How much more are ye better than the fowls?”*

D. How many times have you been at church camp, getting to bed late because of the good fellowship.

1. Then you didn’t sleep well, because no matter how comfortable, that cot or air mattress was not your usual bed.
2. And then after 5 fitful hours – at 5:00 a.m. those two neighborhood ravens start their unearthly squawking?
3. Do you enjoy the sound which the raven makes? Caw, caw, caw!
4. And not just tiny calls either; they seem to scream at the top of their incredible little lungs.
5. Their voices far exceed the size of their bodies.
6. The Lord *“giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry.”*
7. The quality of the prayer is not what catches the Lord’s attention; and it’s not their volume either.
8. If your feeble thoughts and words are intended for the Lord’s ear, He hears them as beautiful prayers, though they may sound like squawking to the ears of other sinners.

E. And while we’re at it, how much intelligent thought is there in that bird’s squawk?

1. The raven nestling, screeches out her requests and it sounds like music in the ear of her mother.
2. In she swoops with the entrails of dead skunk – no wonder it’s an unclean bird.
3. I know that often times you stutter and stammer before the Lord, especially in the light of His holiness.
4. But don’t be concerned about your ignorance and poor vocabulary.
5. Remember, *“he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.”*
6. You are nothing but a child – a baby – but the mother knows the desire of her child, even when there are no words involved.
7. And the Lord loveth more deeply than a nursing mother.

- F. A raven sitting high in a tree with the bright sky behind him, might look like a black blur.
1. But have you been up close – with the sun shining on him? Now, he's not black, but a deep lustrous blue.
 2. You can disagree with me if you like, but there is beauty in everything the Lord has made – despite the curse upon most things.
 3. That raven may be an unclean and abominable bird, but there is still beauty in him.
 4. Until you look at his beak. The proboscis of the raven is, in my opinion, overly large – obtuse; grotesque.
- G. You are not an animal – not even similar to your favorite animal.
1. You have been made in the likeness and image of God.
 2. When the Lord first looked at our first father he pronounced him as *“very good”* – proboscis and all.
 3. Yes, Adam sinned and fell from his original beauty, but there still is in you and me something which appeals to the Creator – and it far exceeds anything which the raven has.
 4. *“Ask and it shall be given unto you; seek, and eye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you.”*
- H. How long do ravens live? Probably longer than sparrows, but certainly not 3 score and 10 years.
1. Spurgeon made a statement which probably would get his newspaper contract cancelled today.
 - a. *“If thousands of ravens had their necks wrung tomorrow, I do not think that there would be any vehement grief and sorrow in the world about them.*
 - b. *There would be only be a number of poor dead birds, and that would be all.”*
 2. The Bible asks *“Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.”* Two sparrows are worth 1/5 of a drachma – less than a penny.
 3. *“Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows”* – even more than a thousand ravens.
 4. You are an immortal soul, and of more value than the combined wealth of the world.
 5. If the Lord hears the cries of sparrows and ravens, will He not listen to you?
- I. By the way, has the Lord ever commanded that raven to pray?
1. Where in God's word is the bird exhorted to cry out to God?
 2. *“How much more are ye better than the fowls?”*
 3. I wouldn't want to guess how many times the Lord has commanded, exhorted and encouraged you and me to pray. I don't have the time to look up all those verses.
 4. When our visitors, Mark and Ruth Harbour, left last Sunday night, they invited Judy and me to drop in to visit them the next time we are in Taiwan, and I assured them that we would.
 5. Was their offer genuine? Probably. Was it realistic? Not so much.
 6. But the Lord's invitation to drop in to see him through prayer is as genuine as mom's invitation – *“supper's ready.”*
- J. And do you remember when Abraham was in prayer for his nephew Lot and the city of Sodom?
1. Do you recall that he in a very humble way sort of argued with the Lord?
 2. Lord, if there were a hundred righteous people would you destroy the city of Sodom? How about 50? 10?
 3. I don't recommend that you learn to argue with the sovereign God, but I do recommend that you plead the promises which He Himself has given you.
 4. The raven can offer no such arguments, and he can point to no promises. He can only squawk.
 5. *“How much more are ye better than the fowls?”*

IV. Conclusion.

- A. God's creation encourages us to pray.
1. God's word takes God's creation and encourages us to pray.
 2. Even if you can do little more than squawk and croak like a raven, *“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God”* – **Philippians 4:6.**