

2<sup>nd</sup> February 2023

## Broken

**"February makes a bridge, and  
March breaks it."**

George Herbert, *Jacula Prudentum*

*Jacula Prudentum* – or "Darts of the Wise" – is a collection of almost 1200 proverbs compiled by the 17<sup>th</sup> century Christian Divine, George Herbert. The collection includes many well-known sayings, such as: "Help thyself, and God will help thee"; "You may bring a horse to a river, but he will drink when and what he pleaseth"; "Whose house is of glass must not throw stones at another". The collection has many resonances with the Bible's "Book of Proverbs" and many of Jesus' own sayings and epithets.

I was intrigued to find in the collection the proverb quoted above, appropriate after my reflection yesterday on the first day of February:

*February makes a bridge, and March breaks it.*

I don't know whether this saying is of Herbert's own making, or a proverb current in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. But I know that it contains an important truth.

If the month of February can be a time of purification, of growth and new beginnings, then, as sure as eggs are eggs, that purification will not last for ever and keep us perfect for all time, just as our Baptism as babies doesn't make us saints. If February is a bridge, as Herbert suggests, from old failures to new beginnings, then we have to be aware that pretty soon March will come along and break our resolve to do good. Indeed, in that sense, the March that "breaks it" might actually come along on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February! Such is the nature of the human condition.

We live daily in that tension between new beginnings and brokenness. We have resolve, and we fail. We fail, and we can begin again. We have new life, and we mess up. We are cast down, and we are raised up again. Such is the nature of our commitment – we need to be purified again and again and again. And such is the nature of the Grace of God – we are given another chance, again, and again, and again.

If March has come early for you this year – even on the second of February – don't panic. It's just because you're human. So believe in this – the day of your purification can be right now, and the second of February – and any other day that follows – can become your first day once again.

### **A prayer for today**

*Lord, keep my bridge strong, so I can cross again to a new beginning. Amen*

*An original reflection by © Tom Gordon*

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