

SUBSTANCE OF A SERMON PREACHED BY MR. C. HEMINGTON, AT GOWER STREET CHAPEL, LONDON, ON SUNDAY EVENING, 9th OCTOBER, 1892.

Text: "The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it." (Proverbs x.22)

What are life, health, riches, and the greatest amount of temporal good without the blessing of the Lord? It is only like a handful of snow in the hand of a little child. The child, being too simple-minded to understand anything about the philosophy of congealed vapour, is greatly delighted with a ball of snow and thinks to keep it by him for future amusement; and, whilst his little mind is carried away with it, the snow melts in his hand. So it is with life, health, gold and silver, name and fame, popularity, distinction, position, and everything else of a temporal nature without the blessing of the Lord. But perhaps some of the young people here tonight would be ready, if I were speaking to them more privately in the school, to ask me such questions as these: Are not life and health blessings of the Lord? Are not riches the Lord's blessings? Scripture says: "The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine," "and the cattle upon a thousand hills" (Haggai ii.8), Psa.1.10). To those questions I answer that they certainly are God's providential mercies, though thousands by their abuse turn them into curses. My own opinion is this: that it would be a great blessing for thousands in the world were they to be deprived of their riches, because they would then no longer have such opportunities as their wealth now affords them of living in such shameful, licentious, and debauched ways as they do now. Besides which the mind of the natural man never goes in search of good beyond that which is natural. Give to a natural man all the good of this life that his covetous mind craves, and you give him all he wants. You give him the very heaven which, if he could have his own way, he would choose for himself wherein to abide for ever. Just for a moment or two, before I come more closely to my text, take the natural man in three positions of life.

1. Take him in poverty. There he is grinding at the mill of toil with very little grist. There he is year by year in the sweat of his face, struggling to earn his bread and keep a little house over his head; but he is always poor and, in thousands of instances, deeply in debt. Ask that man what would be the blessing of the Lord to him, and he would say: "A better position in life - more money, better clothes for my children, more comforts in my house, a better furnished table, less anxiety and care about how I am to pay my way." Well, if the providence of God should turn the scale in that man's circumstances, take him right out of his poverty,

and put him down in the midst of wealth - and such a change has often taken place - it would be a very great blessing of the Lord, but not the blessing that is mentioned in my text.

2. Take the natural man in sickness. There he is racked with pain upon his bed; his flesh is rapidly wasting upon his bones; at last the poor man is told that his disease is mortal, there is no hope, he must die. Ask that man what he considers the greatest blessing which God could bestow upon him, and he would doubtless say: "To let me live, and not die." And if God, by a miracle, should raise that man up from the gates of death, restore him to his former health and activities, it would be a very great blessing, but not the blessing of my text.

3. Take the young man about to go into business. His parents are very poor, and he himself has very little money with which to embark. Ask that young man what particular blessing his mind is most set upon. He would say: "More money. If I could only put my hands upon £200, I think that would do." Now if that amount should be given to him, it would be a blessing of the Lord, but it would not be the blessing of my text.

I hope now to try, with the Lord's help, to speak to you of -

I. "The blessing of the Lord" - what it is.

II. "It maketh rich", and in what way.

III. How we are to understand the last part of the text -
"And He addeth no sorrow with it."

I. "The blessing of the Lord." I hope my young people will remember the remarks I have made; they should ever distinguish between what I should call indefinitely a blessing of the Lord and definitely the blessing of the Lord. And what is it? It is above and beyond all the good of earth, be it what it may. O that my young friends may be helped to pray and to see that no amount of temporal blessing can do anything for the soul. Temporal blessings can serve us only as creatures dependent upon the providence of God, and therefore Christ admonishes His disciples: "Take no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself" (Matt.vi.34). "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on" (Luke xii.22). O that the young people may remember this! O that the infinite Spirit of the living God would drive this one word into some of their young hearts effectually and into the hearts and consciences of others who have not yet apprehended it! What is that? say you. "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark viii.36). What a question! That question applies to some here, I am afraid;

and how applicable to the vast majority of human beings everywhere! Look at the vehement striving, the assiduity, the diligence, the rising up early and going to bed late! And what for? To accumulate wealth, to put it in the bank or the Building Society! "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

The blessing of the Lord spoken of in my text is the salvation of the soul. It is eternal life, which is the gift of God. It is the precious Christ, Who is God's unspeakable gift, with all the durable riches and righteousness that are in Him.

"Saved, and saved alone by grace;
Saved to see my Saviour's face;
Saved from Satan's iron yoke,
And the law that I had broke." (576)

Now that is the blessing of the Lord, and I will say to all in this chapel (and God knows my heart): O, to have it! O to know what it is - to have grace in exercise to bless and praise a good God for having bestowed upon us His sovereign and distinguishing favour!

Eternal Punishment. What is the blessing of the Lord? The salvation of the soul. It is being pulled out of the fire, the fire of hell. "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God" (Psa.ix.17). What a terrible thing is that! Many people deny it. I was preaching at Blunsdon about a fortnight ago - in the chapel in the afternoon, and in the evening the service was in a barn. After tea, one of the deacons said to me, just before the service: "Well, Mr. Hemington, you will have a wonderfully mixed congregation tonight - all sorts of creeds and sects of people will be there." I was led to dwell very much upon the wrath of God against the wicked, and also upon the eternity of future punishment. I saw first one and then the other scowl, and after a time some got up and walked out. From what I was afterwards told about them, I should conclude that they did not believe in an eternal, burning hell. They perhaps believe that there is a hell, but that it will burn itself out, and that, after a time, the wicked will cease to be. It is a dangerous and a dreadful thing to imbibe notions which are contrary to the plain declarations of Scripture. My argument with such sophisticated characters is this: that the everlasting duration of God, the everlasting blessedness of the saints, and the everlasting duration of hell stand or fall together. I have looked into this matter very closely, and, although I do not profess to be a Greek scholar, yet I can read the Greek, and I bless God for it. The Greek words have the same force and the same unqualified meaning when applied to the damned as when applied to the godly. And if the word translated "everlasting" when applied to the wicked could be taken

in a limited sense - if it could be proved that it does not mean "endless" - then it would at the same time be proved that the everlasting God is not an endless God, but a God that will cease to exist. "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." And what about the burning of hell? Let God's word settle that, and His word says: "The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever" (Rev.xiv.11); "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark ix.44, 46,48). But if I were to go on any longer upon that point, my remarks would be very depressing, particularly to God's children.

The Salvation of the Soul. Now what a mercy it is that God has sent His Son into this world! What for? To save poor sinners - save them from the wrath to come. Paul says: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (I Tim.i.15). To save what kind of sinners? Young sinners, middle-aged sinners, old sinners; little sinners (though I do not hold with the doctrine of little sinners), great sinners; very black sinners, and the very vilest of sinners. I believe with dear Mr. Gadsby:

"The vilest sinner out of hell,
Who lives to feel his need,
Is welcome to a throne of grace,
The Saviour's blood to plead" (527)

Everyone in Gower Street chapel this evening that feels himself a needy, broken-hearted sinner - everyone whom the Spirit of God has made to feel his need of Christ - may take comfort and encouragement; and such, I am perfectly sure, the blessed God will save from perishing. This, then, is the blessing of the Lord, the salvation of the soul; it is being plucked as a brand from the burning.

II. "It maketh rich." How does this blessing make rich? It makes rich not in perishable things, but in divine wealth. Toplady puts it (and I do like the couplet):

"I'm rich to all the intents of bliss
If Thou, O God, art mine." (940)

Is not that beautifully put? A man may be as rich as a Rothschild, but what of that if he is a stranger to the blessing of the Lord? A man may die a great statesman, poet, philosopher, or anything else that is great. His bones may be conveyed to Westminster Abbey, and he may be enrolled upon the page of English history. But what of all that if he goes out of the world without the blessing of the Lord? It is having God that makes one rich. Do not forget that. I speak now to the young when I make that remark. O that

God, if His sovereign will, would make you understand this! By transference it makes you rich. The rich of this world often become so by the transfer of such property into their hands as previously belonged to others. So spiritually, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we become personally rich when the righteousness of Christ is transferred to us by imputation, when the Lord Jesus takes our sins - that is, when we are brought to see our interest in His death upon the cross. That takes place only through the Spirit's revelation in the heart. Then the sinner sees that the Lord Jesus Christ has taken his sins, his filthy garments, his rags, and given him His purity, as in the case of Joshua. That is what takes place when the sinner is brought to see that the Lord Jesus Christ has delivered him from his ruin and beggary and put him down in all the comforts of His redeeming work. Then the sinner says that he is made rich, and that is how he is made rich.

God has been the God of His people from all eternity. By His own sovereign act God became the God of His people, and from all eternity they have been rich in His purpose. We do not become rich in personal possession until God manifestly becomes our God through our being born again of His Spirit and having Christ formed in our hearts the hope of glory. Now when that blessed change takes place, then the blessing of the Lord makes the sinner rich, and that is how it is done.

III. Now, then, how are we to take the last part of the text?

No Blessing upon Carnal Devices. Natural men may have an abundance of this world's goods, and they may have an abundance of sorrow added thereto; and often they have, but no blessing of the Lord to help them. Covetous Ahab wore a crown, but look at him! There he lies upon a bed of discontent (I Kings xxi.4). Gehazi was heavily laden with his bags of silver and changes of raiment, but look at him! The leprosy cleaves to the man (II Kings v.27). Haman's mortification was the canker in his boasted glory (Esther vi.12). And when God's children follow their own natural desires and inclinations about temporal things - the good things of this life - they think little upon it, but they are making a bed of sorrow for themselves; and God will deal with them just as He did with Abraham (Gen.xx.16) and with His people Israel as recorded by the prophet Isaiah (xxx.1-3).

All overruled for good. Well, how are we to take this last clause in the text? "He addeth no sorrow with it". I take it as meaning that nothing shall be added to the blessing of God - nothing come upon the godly who receive this blessing of the Lord - but what shall be overruled for their good. We certainly cannot take this last clause in that strictly literal and absolute sense

as meaning that, wherever God gives His blessing to a man, that man never has any more sorrow. It certainly cannot be taken like that; for what people have more sorrow than God's people? Mark you, then, all the sorrow we have in the world (and O that God would enable the young to understand this!) comes through the fall of man. And then, again, we procure an immense amount of sorrow to ourselves. Lot's covetousness was fraught with bitterness. He was a good man, and, as the Lord had given him His blessing, Lot's covetousness (which was his own act) was overruled for his ultimate good. All our pain, grief, and sorrow go to make up that tribulation which Christ told His disciples they should have in the world. They often have a cup full of sorrow. Oh, what trials do come upon the godly! What trials some of you have passed through since the Lord called you by His grace! And so have I. The waters of a full cup have been wrung out to some of you (Psa.lxxiii.10). The word which Christ spoke to that dear disciple might sometimes have been spoken to some of us: "Woman, why weepest thou? (John xx. 13). Ah, we have had to weep, groan, and sigh, and I have never in my life felt more than I do now in my declining days what a world of sorrow this is - a world of remorse, disappointments, blighted hopes, ruined prospects, bereavements, griefs, and distresses! But here is the blessing, that, whenever a trial comes upon the Lord's people, they have His power to support and help them, to comfort and bring them through. And, while I would speak cautiously and in the fear of God, I can honestly assert that I have never been left without help since I have professed God's name. Whatever trials I have come into, I have found this blessing of the Lord to sustain me; and you can say the same. And, besides, that, this blessing of the Lord will deliver God's people by and by out of all their trials for ever and ever.

May God give His blessing to what has been spoken, for His name's sake! Amen.
