

21,167
La G 692

(21,167) La G 692

Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden at Galeed Chapel, Brighton, Sunday morning,
22nd September 1968

"Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." Jeremiah 17:7-8

The two preceding verses show us the opposite. In the text we have a description of a blessed man; in the preceding verses the description of a cursed man; and we are either in the 5th and 6th verses, or we are in the 7th and 8th. As time is short and passing swiftly, it would be well if were brought into a concern as to our real condition before God, and how we stand for eternity.

This cursed man is cursed because he trusts in himself and in an arm of flesh. Why does he do it? Because he knows nothing different. His arm of flesh has never been withered, he has never been emptied from vessel to vessel, he is sufficient in himself, as he thinks, independent of God. He is ignorant of God, ignorant of himself, and therefore trusts in himself and in his arm of flesh, and his heart departs from God. You think of it. O may every word sink into our hearts. He departs from God, departs from a Fountain of living waters, departs from the source of light and life, departs from all blessedness. Very solemn to be thus without God, without hope in the world; and the condition of that man is that he is "like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh." (v.6) Only fleshly good, the things that perish, satisfy and gratify – "The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." But he does not "see when good cometh," he has no ear to hear the good news from heaven, he only understands news from this poor sin-cursed world. We are either there, or we are in the text, and we are going on.

"And shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord." And really, the first and secret ground of this blessedness is that this man has faith. This trust is the trust of faith. Therefore this man, being possessed of a living faith, is a living soul, and where this trust in God is there is a knowledge of Him. This is the secret of his blessedness, not only that he trusts in God, but being possessed of life and faith, and has a knowledge of God; as the Lord Himself said in that wonderful prayer: "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou halt sent." (John 17:3) Blessed is that man. Do you feel it to be so? Perhaps some of you wish that you had this blessedness, but you can say this, as you look upon those whom you believe have this trust, that you see their blessedness, and long to be possessed of it. Well, if you have attained to that degree of faith, "Cast not away (that) confidence, which hath great recompense of reward." (Hebrews 10:35) For if you thus view the blessedness and grace of the Lord's people so as to desire it, you must have got an element of it in your own heart. It has been said, and I feel it is a right saying, that in desire there must be an element of the things desired, there must be a knowledge of them. And there must be a knowledge in this way, that in those things there are things suitable and necessary to your soul's salvation.

"Thus saith the Lord." So this is the Lord's authority, it is the Lord's estimation; it is the Lord's testimony concerning those that trust in Him. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord." It does not say, 'Blessed is the man who is certain he is going to heaven;' it does not say 'Blessed is the man who is assured that all his sins are forgiven.' That is the greatest blessedness for which we should seek, but these are evidences of that blessing, for if the Lord blesses us at all, He will eventually bless us with divine pardon. If ever you have had a single blessing from the Lord by the Spirit, you will not

die before your sins are pardoned. He would not grant you a blessing, and omit that greatest blessing which is necessary for you to enter heaven, for no unpardoned sinner will be found there.

"Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord." So his very position and condition by grace renders that man a blessed man. But we would, as helped, speak of a few ways in which this blessed man trusts in the Lord. But before that, would make this necessary observation: this man has ceased to trust in himself, and the reason why he has ceased to trust in himself is because he has come to the end of all perfection in the flesh. I do feel, especially when there are young people, that we should make ourselves clear. The life of faith is a separate life from a natural life. We must live our natural lives, we are accountable to God for the blessings that He has given to us – our faculties, our intelligence, everything of a natural kind – we are responsible to God for how we use them.

Therefore, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." (Ecclesiastes 9:10) But when we come to things spiritual, it is a different life. Although, mark this, things that are spiritual do enter into things of this life, and it is a wonderful mercy when they do, when grace accompanies our duties and responsibilities, and when grace supports us under afflictions and trials and calamities. But a spiritual life is an inward pilgrimage, it has an eternal end. Whatever we may follow in this life – and we should do it with diligence – we should undertake our studies with diligence, but they have an object and end in this life. Now that is the great thing, it must end, whether we are young, or whether we are old, everything in this life must end. It is a fact, but when it is sanctified it is very salutary. There is no escaping, and as perhaps you have noticed, continual disasters by air and sea, unexpectedly young people are carried away as well as the old. O may the truth of eternity and the shortness of time and the comparative vanity of all things here below be impressed upon us!

"Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord," because he has been brought to an end of himself. Whatever gifts we have naturally, and we should be thankful for them, natural gifts are not sufficient for spiritual life – two different things. May the Lord bless our dear young people with that knowledge. And I would repeat a verse that I have often repeated, and I wish that they could all remember it, because it will help you in your duties and studies, and the responsibilities of this life, and yet set things in their right place. The verse is this:

"Knowledge of all terrestrial things
Ne'er to my soul true pleasure brings;
No peace, but in the Son of God;
No joy, but through His pardoning blood."

(Gadsby's 771)

O may the Spirit write that upon the hearts of all our dear young people, and that will put things in their right places.

Thus saith the Lord; "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord." So this is the work of faith, and therefore it is the work of the new man of grace. And the first thing that faith trusts in is God Himself, because the first work of faith is to believe that God is. It is a great thing to believe that God is. Not nominally – some people believe in God for the simple reason that they do not disbelieve in Him, as they think. But this belief in God brings a man to trust in Him and to have contact with Him. God has had to do with that man. He has first been weakened. "He weakened my strength in the way." (Psalm 102:23) And so far as things spiritual, things that accompany salvation, things that will bring us honourably through life into heaven, where those things are concerned, the natural wisdom is turned into ignorance, strength into weakness, fullness into emptiness. So that it is a mercy to be brought to the end of self-confidence with respect to the things of salvation. You need self-confidence in natural things, but keep the things distinct. You

need natural confidence to enable you to compete with the world. You have to compete with the world, but when you come to your souls and to a spiritual life, you will be taught that natural strength and natural wisdom and natural confidence are useless. But it is a beautiful life, the life of faith, because you have a better confidence, you have a better strength, and you will be brought to enjoy different and better and spiritual blessings. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord."

So the first thing he trusts in, and the last thing, is God Himself, and how this will open the eyes of your understanding! It shines light upon the truth, as for instance, how differently you will sing the first hymn if you know this Lord and trust in Him:

"Great God! how infinite art Thou
What worthless worms are we!
Let the whole race of creatures bow,
And pay their praise to Thee."(Gadsby's 1)

"Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord." The next thing that man will trust in is divine faithfulness. God is faithful, and faithfulness has to do with some promise, some obligation. Therefore God is faithful to the Covenant of Grace. It is ordered in all things and sure, it is certain, because the Covenant of Grace is based upon the infinite Being of God Himself. It is a wonderful thing to be shown that covenant. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant." (Psalm 25:14) From the covenant of grace proceeds everything; all the purposes, the decrees of Jehovah concerning His Church were in the covenant of grace – the everlasting love of the Father, the redeeming love of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of the Holy Spirit in revealing God in Christ.

Jude shows us this; he writes to those who were sanctified by God the Father, that is, set apart in electing love: "Sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ" – preserved in Him from the cradle, through all the season of unregeneracy and wanderings from the Lord – "preserved in Jesus Christ, and called" – called by the Holy Ghost, and called by sovereign grace. And God is faithful to that covenant, and when the Holy Ghost makes over that faithfulness to an unfaithful sinner, O what a solid refuge this faithfulness becomes!

"If we believe not," says Paul, "yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself." (2 Timothy 2:13) And He is faithful to all the promises, those exceeding great and precious promises through the word of God; there is not one there that will not be fulfilled. There is nothing superfluous in the Scriptures; everything is needed. Every blessing will be bestowed, every promise will be fulfilled. God is faithful Who hath promised, and where there is a trust in that divine faithfulness in the promises of God, how they do shine as you see them in the word of God and as they are made over to you, especially as circumstances bring the need of them. "Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." (Isaiah 41:10) God is faithful. "I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest...I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of" – and He will fulfil it.

"Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord." This trust is in divine immutability. We are changing creatures in a changing world, change and decay is evident, evident before us, evident within us, but when a poor changing, decaying sinner, who possesses life and faith, looks out of himself, and from all the changing scenes through which he passes, and beholds an immutable, unchanging, unchangeable God, what a comfort! what a rest it is!

Nothing can alter Him, and sometimes faith will see an example of this immutability in creation. Fashions change, fashions in clothes, fashions in the world, fashions in everything, they change, and eventually the fashion of this world will pass away; but creation, that wonderful work which honours and glorifies God, there is no change in it. Maybe you think that is a simple word. O but what a lot is in it! The only things in this world that do not change are the works of God; they remain exactly what they were at the beginning. That has been a comfort to me more than once. Blessed, then, is the man that trusteth in the immutable, unchanging God, and blessed is the man that trusteth in divine omnipotence. O how this suits a poor, weak, trembling, staggering sinner, no strength in himself, and yet may come to Omnipotence! How tremblingly, and yet how blessedly, did Job venture; you can almost hear Job whispering to himself as he approached the throne of grace: "Will He plead against me with His great power? No; but He would put strength in me." (Job 23:6) Blessed is the man that trusteth in this divine Omnipotence. It is the weak that trust there; it is the blessedness of the weak that they are strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus. "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord."

Blessed is the man that trusts His righteousness. And the man that trusts in the righteousness of the Lord Jesus is a man that has seen that his own righteousness is as filthy rags. An outstanding case of this was the Apostle Paul. He was a Pharisee of the Pharisees, he was righteous, he was a good young man, but he was in a delusion. And if you read the 7th Romans you will see how the Lord dealt with him, how He dealt with his righteousness, how He tore it to shreds, gave him to know what Job's ditch was, until his clothes abhorred him. It is indeed a blessed man that knows it, who is taught it.

"Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress."

(Gadsby's 103)

Ah, when one is given to feel the filthy rags with which he is clothed by nature in the fall, and then given a change of raiment, as was Joshua in type: "Take away the filthy garments from him." (Zechariah 3:4) And as the prodigal when he returned to his father - you see, he had come to the end of all he had trusted in, he had taken of his father's riches, and went away with them, he intended to be independent and have a good time. A lot of young people think that. But the Lord stopped him, He brought it all to nothing, He brought him to rags and beggary, he was hunger-bitten, and then he came to the end of everything: "I will arise," yes, he had come to the end of himself: "I will arise and go to my father." And the father met him; he commenced to confess his sins, but his father did not wait for the end of it. He said: "Bring forth the best robe" – the best robe, not the second-best! He did not say, 'He has been an unworthy son, he has wasted my riches with riotous living, just bring something better than he has got left.' No! 'Bring forth the very best' – "the best robe, and put it on him." (Luke 15:22) O this blessed inward teaching of the Holy Ghost! Blessed man!

Who else can be thus blessed? Who else can be happy? Let a man possess what he will, let him attain to what he will, all that must end, and sometimes 'short's the warning.' But these things are eternal, every one of these things we have mentioned is imperishable, indestructible, undefiled, and undefilable. Blessed man!

"Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord." Another thing this man trusts in is the word of God. O how solemn it is that our modern scholars are trying to cut the Word of God to pieces! Like Jehoiakim the king. They brought him the scroll, that much of the Scriptures that were known then; he took a penknife and cut it to pieces and threw it in the fire, and thought he had got rid of it, and got rid of all the written judgements. But you could burn the last volume of the Bible in the land, and it would still hold good – God's infinite mind. And Baruch the scribe was instructed to write

another book with all that was in the former scroll, and added judgements to it. (Jeremiah 36) Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Word of God, the Holy Scriptures. And if you do, there are times when the Word of God enters, enters into your heart. O how differently two people might read the same chapter!

You take for instance, 53rd Isaiah; a natural man may read that in the letter of it, and it have no meaning, have no effect upon him at all. But one possessed of divine faith, a poor sinner who needs the atonement of Christ, for him to read that chapter, and for the Holy Ghost to convey the influence of dying love: "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. ... The chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. ... And the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." (Isaiah 53:3-6) If the blessed Spirit should show us and give us to feel the heinousness of our sins, their corruption, and the love of God in Christ, in condescending to be made sin, that wretched sinners might be made righteous –

"But what can poor lost sinners say,
When once they get a view;
And hear the blessed Spirit say,
'All this, was done for you?'"

(Gadsby's 680)

This is a blessed man! Do you think so? If there was a worldly man in here this morning, he would be able to tell you of the things natural, which he would consider to have far more blessedness and happiness in them. But if you were to compare them, why, salvation, the kingdom of grace in the heart, a knowledge and a possession of the Lord Jesus Christ are things incomparable, and O how they do revive a drooping soul! When you are brought into a spiritual meditation of these things, it does sanctify: "Sanctify them through thy truth." (John 17:17) And the word of God has a sanctifying influence.

You take another chapter, the 51st Psalm, precious Psalm! A Psalm which only great sinners know anything about. Has the word of God been made precious to you? You can trust in it because it is given by divine inspiration: "Heaven and earth shall pass away: but My words shall not pass away." (Mark 13:31) "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is." Well, really, trust and hope go together, because this trust is faith, faith and hope work together. Indeed, it is true to say that one grace cannot be possessed unless all the graces of the Spirit are in the soul. That might be a help to some; it is impossible for you to possess faith and hope and be destitute of the fear of God. You cannot have a part of Christ, you either have all of Him or nothing.

Is not there a response in some of your hearts; you long to possess all of Him? It is a real experience, and there will be a reason for it. I believe, in my little experience I have felt and said this in secret, 'Lord, I need all of Thee, I need all Thy precious blood, I need Thy righteousness, I need Thy holiness, I need everything that Thou hast condescended to bring, I need every bit of the work that Thou hast wrought out to be wrought in me, I need it all.' And I would say again, if you have anything, you have it all, you cannot have a part. Therefore, be thankful, if you have any evidence in your experience of what is of God. If ever He has touched your heart, you will go to heaven. He will do nothing for and nothing in a reprobate; He has nothing to do with him. So it is very solemn, as we commenced – we are either inside of the 5th and 6th verses, or we are inside of the 7th and 8th.

"'Tis a point I long to know,
(Oft it causes anxious thought),
Do I love the Lord, or no?
Am I His, or am I not?"

(283)

Well, the Lord alone can answer that question, and when He answers it, O how precious that answer will be! "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love" – and this will be the evidence of it: "with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." (Jeremiah 31:3) So that if ever you have felt that inward drawing to the Lord Jesus, to the things of God, it is an evidence that you are loved with an everlasting love.

One thing more before we close: "To him that is joined to all the living, there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion." (Ecclesiastes 9:4) Now, are you joined to all the living in this sense: Do you love the people of God? Do you feel joined to them in union? Do you sometimes say:

"I love to meet among them now,
Before Thy gracious feet to bow,
Though vilest of them all."?

(Gadsby's 938)

Do you feel that you are joined to His blessed word, and to His Gospel? He that is "joined to all the living" – I mean, joined in your affection. You might not feel that you are able to confess that you are joined to the Lord, that you possess Him, but you would if you could, though you might not be able to say that you feel that you are one of His people, but you are joined to them in love and affection. Well, "To him that is joined to all the living, there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion."

Amen.