

Notes of Sermon Preached by Pastor Henry Haddow at Brockham Green
Lord's day morning October 9th 1910

Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die: Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient before me: Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain. (Proverbs 30:7-9)

I had no thought whatever of reading these words by way of text until you were singing the last hymn, and why I left the words I had on my mind, and turned to these, I know not. I hope the Lord will help me in speaking, and favour your souls in hearing. The grace of God humbles a man, and brings a man down, and makes him feel what a fool he is. The Lord takes a sinner in hand, and makes him feel what a fool he is. And so you find what Agur says: *I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy. Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what his son's name, if thou canst tell? (v.2-4)* O I say, friends, grace lays a man low, and gives him to feel what a fool he is. As Asaph says: *So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee. (Psalm 73:22)* And perhaps that is how some of you have felt during the week – such a foolish creature, and so ignorant. I believe, friends, this is the finger of God, when man realises that he is nothing, and less than nothing. God is an eternal God. This will cause a man to say:

*Great God! how infinite art Thou!
What worthless worms are we!
Let the whole race of creatures bow,
And pay their praise to Thee! (Isaac Watts)*

Do not you sometimes seem really as nothing when you think of the eternal God, and you have the desire in your soul to ascribe greatness unto God, and holiness unto God? Ah, when God hallows, if I may put it before you this morning, His Name in your hearts, you will fall flat at His feet, and call upon your soul to bless and praise God's holy Name. And even while you do this, you will feel God is far above all blessing and praise. I have sometimes felt that I must die to praise Him. It is good when the Lord tunes our hearts to praise Him. And our hearts are like David's harp, of solemn sound.

*Hosannas languish on our tongues,
And our devotion dies. (Isaac Watts)*

There is no man in this house of prayer that can worship God as they would worship Him, and glorify Him in his praise as he would glorify Him. But I believe that every godly soul in this house of prayer knows what it is to come to God in prayer. *O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come. (Psalm 65:2)* There is not a godly man in this house of prayer but who from day to day comes to Him. You have some request to bring before Him. *Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made unto God. (Philippians 4:6)* O what a mercy when the Lord gives us grace to walk in obedience to His Word. *Take...no thought for the morrow...Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. (Matthew 6:34)* O but come before the Lord and make known as best you can.

Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die. Agur was a godly man, and he knew not how many days, or months, or years he might have to live in the world. He asked the Lord to do two things for him, and not deny him as long as he lived. *Do not deny me these two things before I die.* So he comes before the Lord day after day with this petition. And mark this: if you are a godly man, you will know something of Agur's request. I am as satisfied of it as I am of my own existence. There is not a godly soul in this house of prayer this morning but who has something in the

substance of Agur's request to bring before the Lord. O my friends, is it not true that you have to come continually to the throne of grace, and beseech the Lord to do something for you? To remove from you something that you have no power to remove from you. You come before Him, and you make known your requests concerning the matter.

Remove far from me – put away from Thy servant – *vanity and lies*. What a good request of the good man Agur, and what a good request of a godly soul! We are in a vain world, friends. *Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher...all is vanity. (Ecclesiastes 1:2)* Those vain thoughts will come in, and you have no power to keep them out. So you come before the Lord, and ask Him to do for you what you cannot do for yourself. *Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity. (Psalm 119:37)* Do not you feel this? I know some of you do – you will sin with your eyes. It is a solemn thing. God will not look upon sin with any allowance. Your eyes behold wickedness, and there are your eyes going after wickedness. This will make a man groan before God in secret. It will squeeze from him such a prayer as this: Remove me from vanity; turn off my eyes from beholding vanity.

*From vanity turn off my eyes;
Let no corrupt deign,
Nor covetous desires, arise
Within this soul of mine. (Isaac Watts)*

O what a mercy, friends, to have a God to go to, to tell Him the desire of your soul, to breathe out your heart's desire unto the Lord, and call upon the name of the Lord. To cry unto God most high, unto God who performeth all things for me. *I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. (Psalm 121:1)*

The Lord Jesus Christ prays for His people. In *John 17* He says: *I pray...that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. (v.15)* Was that not a good prayer the Lord taught His disciples (some call it "The Lord's Prayer.") He prays that they might be kept in the hour of temptation. Where had Joseph been had not God kept him in the hour of temptation? Temptation and opportunity. And where is a man, unless God keep him? *My steps had well nigh slipped. (Psalm 73:2)* It is a mercy to know our weakness. God makes us to know our weakness. God is our strength. I am weak. He is mighty. I am a poor, weak, helpless worm of earth. He is *able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. (Ephesians 3:20)* He has heaven and earth, as one has put it, *at His command*, and He *waits to answer prayer. (Joseph Swain)* It is a mercy to be a praying man, and to realise that God does answer prayer. As we sometimes sing:

*That were a grief I could not bear,
Didst Thou not hear and answer prayer;
But a prayer-hearing, answering God
Supports me under every load. (William Cowper)*

Ah, God does support His people under loads of temptation, under loads of affliction. God sustains His people, and comforts them in their afflictions. Thy word hath helped me. *No temptation hath 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. (1 Corinthians 10:13)*

Remove far from me vanity and lies. The remnant of Israel will not do evil. They shall lie down and feed.

*O send Thy Spirit down to write
Thy law upon my heart!
Nor let my tongue indulge deceit,
Nor act the liar's part. (James Montgomery)*

Remove far from me lies. Make me honest. It is a good thing to be made honest by the Spirit of God. I believe this, friends, that God solemnly gives His people to feel these things, as in His sight. Perhaps sometimes you have been sorely put to it as to whether you have spoken of a thing just right. I know one person who is very tender in the fear of God. How sorely tried she is. And so sometimes the enemy takes advantage, and brings the soul low. He says: "You said so and so. You ought to have put it so and so." God is greater than your heart. He can read your thoughts. He knows all about you. Honours crown His sacred brow. He knows all about His dear people. You would not deceive your fellow creatures – *Never, never may we dare, What we're not to say we are.* (Joseph Hart) It is just to speak of those things God has made known to you, and not to stretch beyond them.

Remove far from me vanity and lies. O give me more grace, more godly fear. Lord, keep me day by day. *Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.* (Psalm 17:5) I am in a wilderness. Lord, do Thou guard me, and keep me from evil. Help me at all times to walk in Thy fear. This is a blessed man that fears God, and such shall find refuge in the Person of God's dear Son. And God will help them, and stand by them in the hour of persecution. Ah, many a child of God is persecuted because he does not tell lies. We are living in solemn times, and those of you who are in business can follow me. There is so much lying and cheating. But if he has the fear of God in his heart he cannot cheat, and say a thing is what it is not. O my friends, a man has to be honest, and speak of the thing as it is. It is so, friends. I believe many a child of God is persecuted because he cannot misrepresent things. Some men do not want godly men, because they would lose their trade. O, says the child of God, remove it. Turn off my eyes from these things. Lord, help me, and give me grace that I may be kept from lying. Lord, remove vanity from me.

And then the man of God, having asked the Lord to remove these things from him, he asks Him not to give him poverty, and not to give him riches. You do not find many people ask God to give them riches, but they ask God not to give them poverty. You do not find many. A child of God says: Do not give me poverty, do not give me riches. I do not want to be poverty-stricken. Now, supposing God gives a man poverty; He can give him grace. God has given many a man grace in the hour of poverty, to say:

*My Father's hand prepares the cup,
And what He wills is best. (Toplady/Wesley)*

I would rather have the dogs licking my sores than to be like the rich man. The rich man died, and lifted up his eyes in hell. Lazarus died, and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom. The rich man saw Lazarus afar off in Abraham's bosom, and requested that Lazarus might be sent to dip his finger in water, and cool his tongue. *But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.* (Luke 16:25) O blessed poor, if God has given you poverty, and given you grace to bear it. And sometimes He does not answer our petitions. He gives us poverty, but He gives us grace to bear it. Men quarrel with these things, and they say the hand of God is not in them, it is the man's own fault. But a child of God sees God's hand in poverty. Yes, I am satisfied of it. He makes poor, and He makes rich. The rich and the poor meet together, and the Lord is the maker of them both. And where the Lord gives poverty, He can give grace in the hour of poverty to bear His will. I believe the Lord has so blessed some of His loved ones in poverty. Then they praise Him for a cup of cold water. Have you ever seen Christ in a glass of water, or in a bit of bread? He is able to make all grace abound.

The man of God pleaded with God after this manner lest he should be tempted to steal. God is a jealous God, and they would not take the name of the Lord in vain. They know their weakness, and they do not know what they might be left to do if poverty overtook them. O Lord, do not give me poverty, and do not give me riches. As I have already said, you do not find many men pray after this manner. But here the man of God asks the Lord not to give him riches. You know, if a man is rich, he is responsible. A man cannot be rich without having great responsibility resting upon him.

Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy. (1 Timothy 6:17) A man is only a steward, and he will be called to account. A child of God knows this in measure as taught by God.

Do not give me riches. I remember my dear Pastor once speaking of a young man who was left an estate. A person dies, and leaves him property and riches. And what does the young man do? He calls the church together for prayer, and asks an interest in the prayers of the church for the Lord to give him wisdom in disposing of them. And God could give that man wisdom. But still there is that danger. Gideon's army must be reduced, and go against thousands. Why? Lest they should say their own hand had gotten them the victory. There is a danger, too, in poverty, lest one should be tempted to steal, and in riches, lest he should be full. A man of God wants the Lord to find him with food convenient. *Give me neither poverty, nor riches.*

Give us this day our daily bread – or, as you have it in the margin of your Bible: *give me my allowance.* God knows what is best, and so a man of God would leave it with the Lord. Give me that portion of my allowance. Feed me with food convenient. Thus there is no danger of being full, and denying the Lord, or being poor, and stealing, and bringing disgrace upon His name. That is a good prayer, to be brought before the Lord and say: “Just feed me with food convenient. Thou knowest what I need. Lord, give me food convenient. Thou knowest my family, and the needs of my family. But feed me with food convenient, lest I be full.” There is this danger, then, and if you ransack the Bible, you will find that some have even fallen into this – they have denied the Lord.

Lest I be full, and deny thee. Pharaoh says: *Who is the Lord? My own wisdom hath brought me these riches.* It is the Lord. He has not been taken into account. There is this danger, and, says the man of God, Do not give me riches, lest I should deny thee – and not poverty, lest I should be poor and steal, and take the name of the Lord in vain. God is a jealous God, and His people would not take His name in vain if left to be poor. They dare not say they would not. He knows his own weakness, how liable he is to fall, and therefore his eyes are up unto the Lord. “God is my God” says the child of God. “I would not take His name in vain.” O blessed man that can say, “Thou art my God.” O blessed man that knows God, and has a single eye to His glory in all things.

Now, I put it to you: when you come before the Lord, have you in your petition a single eye to God's glory in the things of this life? And in your salvation, have you a single eye to God's glory? If not, it is not of the Lord. I have no hesitation in saying it. God prompts His people to prayer. Many of your prayers are not real prayers. All real prayer is indited in the heart by God the Holy Ghost, and in that prayer, as the soul pours out their prayers to the Lord, is a single eye to God's glory. Lord, what I ask at Thy hands I have a single eye to Thy glory, and ask the Lord to give me that which He thinks best. He knows what is best. Blessed place to be in, when you have been favoured to fall flat at His blessed feet, and say, “Thy will be done.”

Two things have I required of thee; deny me them not before I die. Do not let there be a day come when these things shall be denied me. *Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain.*

The Lord add His blessing.