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J.W. Sperling-Tyler

Substance of Sermon preached by our Pastor

on Thursday Evening, June 6. 1974.

Lesson. Luke 12. vv. 17-40.

As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake, with thy likeness. Psalm 17. 15.

We are deeply conscious, beloved friends, that a large measure of grace is needed by the unworthy instrument in the pulpit now to speak unctuously, profitably from this very sacred portion of the Word of God. It has been blissfully experienced by some who worshipped God in this Sanctuary: this blessed portion constituted their living and dying testimony.

Two points emerge immediately. One is, this sacred Scripture is divinely positive. That is to say, it expresses the richest measure of holy faith the Lord ever bestows on a child of His this side eternal bliss. We could well say that while in the enjoyment of this blissful portion the sky is cloudless, and how this will search and try those who fear God, because we have heard from the lips of many that they have never known as yet the full assurance of faith as to their personal interest in the Lord. For all those who fear Him this is to come. I would like to make this point with you. If the life of God is in our souls there will be an intensity and concentration of holy desire created by the Spirit that we enjoy the blissful ~~experience~~ assurance before we go within the gloomy vale of death. Not a single child of God is disappointed. None of you who love and fear Him will pass from this world into eternity without this sacred assurance in your souls. Where this is enjoyed, - and this is an interesting point in spiritual experience. Some of God's dear people receive this divine blessing in their youthful days. They are wrought on, brought under condemnation, raised to a living hope and fully delivered before they are twenty. The speaker was in a like case. It is very true that these often experience in their latter stages much darkness and a path of temptation and heavy trial.

The interesting thing is, and I speak from the annals of this Church, they were humble, gracious characters who long sought the Lord and were scarcely able to claim anything. Something arrested them; they fed on a small crumblet from the Table. A number of these characters have gone with great joy to heaven. In the last few months or weeks they lived in the perpetual sunshine of His immutable love. For some now living the Lord has rebuked Satan, and excluded Satan from the inner sanctuary of their souls and they live in great peace and blessed expectation. I will just refer to something that impressed me yesterday. Dear Mr Coleman did not know how to wait to get there. He so longed to be gone that he did not know how to wait to get there. He really embraced death: he put forth both arms ~~and~~<sup>to</sup> embraced it. This is supernatural and divine, and I could name a number of worthies, - Mrs Hook, Mr and Mrs Ashdown, quietly feeding, with a little hope, never feeling to attain to much; feeling they were left a long way behind if any spoke of deliverance, cutting themselves off. In the last period of their lives they were in this rapture, - it is a rapture, because to spell it out it is heaven begun below. It is the beginning of bliss on earth. You do not know anything of sin; it is gone. Your rags are gone; there are bright robes. Instead of sin there is holiness: instead of great conflict, holy peace. Earth has gone; there is nothing to allure, vex or distress you. You are through your last trial, no more trouble to go into. It is amazing to know you are delivered out of all your afflictions. David was: after all his stormy, chequered pathway he was quietly resting and waiting, not another storm, tempest, trial, sorrow, difficulty to go into: all over. So I wanted to make that point.

Of course this will examine us. You dear people in the congregation, what are you saying? Are you saying; "This well describes me. I received my deliverance when young. I was so happy, so favoured, I wanted to go then. The world had departed from me, there was no cloud to obstruct. I saw my Saviour, and the reflection of His blessed image was on me. The devil was silent, the heavens were opened, and I wanted to go."? I remember about two years after I was delivered, while I was in London Mrs Wooller was taken, and the Lord so favoured me I coveted that, I wished it had been me. I could have gone without regret or doubt straight

to glory. How does this find you? Were you delivered when you were young? We have some hoary heads here, and this is a crown of glory in the way of righteousness. Did the Lord deliver our aged friends when they were young, or <sup>are</sup> they still waiting? I must express this: we are persuaded that those anointed for the ministry have already received full, blessed deliverance because it is clear to those who have a discerning mind that a man cannot preach a full gospel unless he has been delivered. If he had not been delivered, how far could he lead the people? He would have to say, if he were honest; "Friends, I cannot take you further because I have never been delivered." Those sent of God are fully delivered so they can lead the people to the Promised Land. I would hope and believe that those who are appointed for the offices of Zion are those who have been delivered, because surely to be a pillar in the Church of God would signify one had been fully delivered. How could a man bear part of the weight of the building unless he was fully delivered? This has been the subject of an inquiry: I have not read it, but I would not suggest for a moment that one must receive full deliverance before following the Lord. A revealed Christ, a sweet hope in His mercy, a sense of His love in the soul; yes: this is requisite.

Does the subject find you? Will you say before God to His praise you were delivered when young? or have you never been delivered? Do you say; "I hope in His mercy; I think on His Name. He is precious to me, and I have got an ache in my heart, a sense of longing, thirsting, panting, but I have not yet received full assurance."? You will. Go home and tell Him again that you need and long for this and you cannot be satisfied without it. The Lord loves to hear these petitions. He will not reject or spurn your humble plea. Tell Him this has priority over body, health, wealth and all below, to know your sins forgiven, your pardon signed, and peace with heaven, - This is like an introduction, so I will try to take up a few basic points before us.

As so often was the case David was in trouble. It seems as though men of the world and powerful, rich men distressed him, and he had a view that is expressed in the word 'portion'. There is a dividing line as to 'portion'. It is a solemn line, and a blessed and sacred one. For those on the wrong side of the dividing line have their portion in this world.

It is all they have. They do not possess Christ, or grace, or the life of God, or holy treasure. Their portion is a perishing one. Those on the right side of this solemn, blessed dividing line have the whole substance of the Text. "As for me," this is<sup>a</sup> beautiful expression, yet solemn because 'as for me' means a turning from all the other part; everything has been resigned. "I have a glorious Object, and consequently a divine objective. As for me, I have seen His lovely face, the reconciled countenance of God in His dear Son incarnate. He has smiled on me. He has arrayed me in garments of His own providing. I have one object."

Think for a moment of those on the wrong side of this solemn, blessed dividing line. They have their portion. This word is well-known: it means one's share, or lot; what is allocated in destiny. They have their portion and it is seen to be a large portion: it amounts to nothing because it is all perishing. In any case, when the breath leaves the body it is all gone. There is no God, no hope, no Christ, no precious blood, no forgiveness, no treasure in heaven. They have had their portion in this life: there is nothing after, that is, in the strictest sense of the term in the last verse. There is a portion from this angle: it is a portion that is almost too terrible to name; it is hell. Remember the case of the rich man and Lazarus. (Luke 16) The rich man had wonderful apparel and dietary; he fared sumptuously every day. What a portion! Says flesh and blood, "This is something I would covet, if my wicked heart and proud nature had its way." Look at the end! Lazarus was full of sores, - and these things are true to day, and will be to the end of this dispensation. "desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores." The rich man died and was buried. No doubt the funeral was congruous with his position in the earth: it would be ornate and grand to the extreme. They would have made a tremendous lot of the man. Where was his soul? He had a portion, - an earthly one. It had all perished. "Men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure: they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes." often to their own destruction. He had had a tremendous portion. He came to ~~break~~ death, the separation of the soul from the body, and that soul was in hell. "And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments." Think of it.

Lazarus died, the poor beggar. What portion had he had? mostly of poverty, affliction, and sores. He had a portion that was invisible to the world. Christ was his portion. When he died he was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. He entered the full bliss of his portion. You remember the dialogue. "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." Where is your portion? what is your portion? The world has gone mad after a portion here below, and the cancer has eaten into the Christian Church. It may be concealed: it is almost like a leech, saying, 'more, more, more.'

What and where is your portion? So those on the wrong side had a great portion. I have never forgotten in Dr Owen's Works a sentence that runs like this. He said; "God gives most of this world's goods to His enemies." Very solemn! That is their portion; their lot: it is all they have. When you think of it, and no doubt you contemplate this, it staggers your mind that many so concentrate on earthly substance and wish for more, and they do not realise that immediately their breath leaves their lungs the whole lot perishes, whereas those who have Christ have the whole of the verse. "As for me, Lord, I am content. My portion is not in this dying world, not in uncertain riches, "for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven." (Prov. 23.5)

"As for me," I want to say two things; they are rather personal; you may have heard them before. I went to school at Olive House for a little while with several, some are still living; some have gone, There was one Alice Wickens: poor Alice was subnormal. I do not know when, but after a time she was admitted to Hellingly Hospital and stayed there. She never came out until she was carried out. They asked me to bury her, and I shall never forget the funeral. I was thinking of her, she was between forty and forty five and she had spent nearly all her life in the Asylum. I thought, what a life of misery and suffering! She had nothing in this life at all. This portion the Lord brought to me. He said to me; "Ah! she did not have her portion here: she is in heaven." That was one of the sweetest funerals to me. I could see her lot below was to be in Hellingly Hospital: the breath left her body, and she is in glory. That was her portion. What about you? If you have the assurance that your portion is Christ and

heaven, this will reconcile <sup>you</sup> to your lot below. You may be disappointed and frustrated: you see others forge ahead and leave you behind, and Christ comes and makes you know He is your portion.

Then there are those on the wrong side of the line. My mind was led before the service to the words of our blessed Lord concerning the Pharisees. Think of those who have their portion here on the wrong side of the line in religion. "And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the ~~streets~~ corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward." (Matt. 6.5) That is their portion; it is all they seek. It is a solemn thing to have a portion in the ~~xx~~ religious world in being seen of men and to receive the praise of men. What does David say? "As for me," Blessed assurance, certainty, and holy reality! Christ was David's Son after the flesh and David's blessed Lord. David was a man after God's own heart. "As for me."

Take the Shunammite. "What is to be done for thee? wouldest thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host?" "As for me, I dwell among mine own people. I have got a portion. Christ is my portion. I am satisfied. As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness." The face of God is visible in divine revelation, - "God and sinners reconciled." And in Jehovah Jesus God looks on repenting sinners, and looks, and loves, and smiles. (850) This is viewing His face. It is a look of love, of compassion. "As for me, I have seen His lovely face, once, twice, thrice. He is my heaven, my portion, my treasure. I resign the world. As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness, - in garments white as snow; arrayed by Him in a wedding garment. As for me." If you can enter into the spirit of this you have got a taste of heaven, a draught of the river of love. I had a sip of it yesterday afternoon at Bethersden. You know when the Lord comes. "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness." I believe He smiled, and I said; Lord, this is a foretaste of heaven. After tea I went back thirty seven years, and I thought, oh the peace! This is a foretaste. "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness." This is satisfaction. There is none in the world, none in men, none in the flesh, none in dying things, none outside Christ.

"As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied." Satisfaction is the consummate bliss of all holy desire, thirsting, panting, longing, praying over all your life. It is the complete consummation of everything. "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied." Take the nature of satisfaction. If you get a touch of the Lord's love there is satisfaction in it. If you get a smile from His sweet face there is satisfaction in it. I felt yesterday, I wish I could stay in this frame, and remain in it till I go. You will know a feeling of satisfaction, peace, joy, blessed expectation; not a shadow of doubt. You will stretch yourself on Christ, the Rock of Ages.

"I shall be satisfied," When? "when I awake, with thy likeness." Blessed be God, we are predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son." This is satisfaction. Man lost His image in Adam: in regeneration the Lord begins to restore that image as He indwells His people. They still have a body of sin and death. The Text shows the death of the saints to be a falling asleep: no terror, no distress, no sting, It is falling asleep, and waking and finding yourself there; at Home with Him. No sin, perfectly holy; and in the immortal glory of the first resurrection the body will be raised, a perfect spiritual and glorious soul and body, shining in the full likeness of our blessed Lord. I remember dear Mr Ashby read this before he entered bliss. This is how I feel; "When shall I wake and find me there?" (473) Amen.