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Sermon preached by Mr. J. Raven at Shaw's Corner, Redhill
on Tuesday, October 15th, 1946

"Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the
God of our salvation. Selah. He that is our God is the God of
salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death.
Psalm 68. 19,20

The Psalmist has just sung, "Thou has ascended on high, thou hast
led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea for the
rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them". And the
Apostle leaves us in no doubt as to whom these words refer. He tells
us in the epistle to the Ephesians very plainly that they refer to the
Lord Jesus Christ, and he points out that as it is said, "Christ
ascended up on high", this implies that first of all He descended;
before His exaltation in glory there was His humiliation upon this
earth, as made sin, and as dying upon the accursed tree. "He humbled
Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross".
O how low did the Lord of life and glory sink that He might lift poor
sinners up on high, "raise the poor out of the dust and the beggar
from the dunghill and set them among princes, even the princes of His
people", and give them to inherit a throne of glory, that the word in
verse 13 might be fulfilled in their experience, "Though ye have lien
among the pots", on the rubbish heap, so to speak, where the worthless
things are thrown, the refuse of the village. "Though ye have lien
among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with
silver and her feathers with yellow gold." In order that His people
might have experience of that, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself stooped
to depths of inconceivable woe. Mention is made of "the things that
He suffered"; I have looked sometimes at those words and cannot see
to the depths of them. "The things that He suffered". Well, having
stooped so low, His well-pleased Father raised Him up and exalted Him
to sit at His own right hand on the throne of majesty and made Him
head over all things to the church. We are told here that He
"received gifts for men", received from His Father gifts, blessings
for His people, "yea, for the rebellious also." I have been thankful
for that word, "Yea, for the rebellious also." What grace shines in
it! One feels that there the God of all grace does give such a kindly
look, a look of love and mercy, upon poor rebellious people. One says:

"Rebellious thou hast been
And art rebellious still,
But since in love I took thee in
My promise I'll fulfill."

We are told in the 53rd of Isaiah, that Christ "made intercession for
the transgressors." It might be said very properly that He makes

intercession for His people, for each one of His elect He makes intercession, but there seems to be something so savouring of divinely rich and sovereign grace in that word, "He made intercession for the transgressors." He hath "received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also that the Lord God might dwell among them", that is to say, that God the Holy Spirit might come down, as one of the Puritan writers expresses it, "Into the rakes and jakes of poor sinners' hearts", as He came down to those sinners at Ephesus to whom the Apostle wrote and said, "You hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins". It is an amazing thing that the Holy, Holy Spirit of God should come into such hearts, into such dunghill hearts as ours are, that He should enter there a quickening Spirit, the anointing which teacheth all things; that He should begin and carry on to its completion a merciful work, convincing of sin, of righteousness and of judgment to come, revealing Christ and glorifying Him, making Him great, making Him an object of such attraction to the soul that the poor sinner's heart is drawn towards Christ.

"O that I now might know
The all-atoning Lamb,
Spirit of truth, descend and show
The virtue of His name".

Then the Psalmist says, "Blessed be the Lord who daily loadeth us with benefits". He has been led in the previous verse to contemplate the wondrous grace of God bestowed upon poor sinners, "yea, the rebellious also", and the richness of the gifts that are bestowed (and they are rich gifts that are bestowed upon poor sinners through Christ Jesus - rich gifts indeed). "Blessed be the Lord who daily loadeth us with benefits". It is through the Lord Jesus Christ and through what He has done that the common mercies of life are continued to all men. Ungodly men do not consider at all what they owe to the Lord Jesus Christ; but for Him and His great work all the good which is bestowed upon them would be cut off; so in that sense He is said to be the Saviour of all men, but especially of them that believe. But then His people are blessed not only with that good that is bestowed more or less upon all men, but their temporal good has a blessing wrapped up in it. The ungodly by his ungodliness turns his good into ill, his temporal blessings into a curse. There is a curse in everything that pertains to the ungodly; whatever his lot, there is a curse in it, but to the people of God, whatever their lot, there is a blessing in it. "Blessed be the Lord", then, "who daily loadeth us with benefits". It is a wonderful favour when a child of God has his eyes anointed with eye-

salve so that he can look around and see the goodness, the mercy, the grace of God, and the rich blessing of God resting upon him in his daily circumstances, his meat, his drink, his sitting down, his rising up, his going out, his coming in, and see himself compassed about with mercies and with blessings. The Psalmist said, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever". "Blessed be the Lord who daily loadeth us with benefits". It is very sweet to be enabled to receive our daily mercies from the hand of God, to realise that it is a good God and Father in heaven that has spread this table, that has provided this comfort, that has clothed this body, that has granted us so many privileges. O what cause for gratitude His people have that they should be so dealt with. One said:

"For blessings like these, so bounteously given,
For prospects of peace and foretastes of heaven,
'Tis grateful, 'tis pleasant, to sing, and adore;
Be thankful for present, and then ask for more".

Such a view of things, as the Lord touches the heart, does bring forth blessing and praise to His holy name. Some of us have known what it is when the Lord, by just a touch, a thought darted into our mind and heart, a sudden view of things in the light of the sanctuary, has shown us that we are compassed about day by day and loaded with benefits from the great Giver of every good and every perfect gift.

"Blessed be the Lord who daily loadeth us with benefits". You remember when the Psalmist in Psalm 103 was calling upon his soul to bless the holy name of the Lord for the benefits bestowed upon him, he begins with the principal of all benefits, that is, with the forgiveness of sins. O what a gift is this! The forgiveness of sins - what a benefit it is! The hymn-writer calls it the "rich gift of love divine" and there is to me such a beauty in that expression, "'tis the rich gift of love divine". The forgiveness of sins! O the wonder of it that God should have devised a way whereby He might be just and the justifier of all that believe in Jesus, that He might forgive sins, that He might speak pardon and peace to the hearts and consciences of poor, burdened, guilty men and women. "Blessed be the Lord". O that will open your lips to praise and bless His holy name if you get that sealed in your heart and conscience, the forgiveness of your sins. When that day comes to you, as it will come to all who wait upon and for the Lord, when you search to find your sins and your sins cannot be found, they are all gone, blotted out by atoning blood, cast into the depths of the sea,

"A happy pardoned child thou art,
And heaven lies at thy door".

"Blessed be the Lord who daily loadeth us with benefits". And then there is this benefit that the Lord bestows upon His people, that they should be under the gracious influence and teaching of His Holy Spirit. What a benefit that is! "Now we have received not the spirit that is of the world but the spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God". To have the Holy Spirit dwelling in the heart, the anointing which teacheth all things, and is truth, and is no lie, what a benefit is this! And where that anointing is once bestowed it abides, as John says, it "abideth in you", and though the dispensations of the Spirit may vary, and sometimes His dealings may be very solemn and even terrifying, yet He never "shifts His habitation" as one says. He never departs from that heart to which He has once come. He may cause His gracious operations to be suspended, but He has not withdrawn. Bunyan puts it in his Holy War, "My Lord Secretary, the Holy Spirit, being grieved with Mansoul withdrew to his secret apartments, and would not grant an audience to the men of Mansoul." O the wonderful mercy of being taught by the Spirit, of being convinced of sin by the Holy Ghost, of being made to feel the want of Christ, and to realise what a precious, needful thing the Lord the Saviour is! made to feel that you cannot do without Him, that you must have Christ or perish. A wonderful blessing this is, and if we are enabled rightly to view it, it is something to bless God for. And I believe the Lord's people do at times, sooner or later, bless God even for these dealings of His Spirit with their souls. They see how there was mercy in it, lovingkindness in it, drawing their souls and leading them to Christ, bringing them within the bonds of the everlasting covenant.

"Blessed be the Lord who daily loadeth us with benefits". And then you think what a benefit this is, for the Lord to put His word into the heart and cause you to hide it there. "Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee", for the Lord to put His word in your heart so that it talks with you. Sometimes His people have the word talking with them in the night as they lie upon their beds. Sometimes the word talks with them in a way of admonition and reproof, maybe to warn them of the evil of some course that their heart is set upon, and the Spirit solemnly and kindly admonishes them. Sometimes He will bring Scriptures into the heart and conscience that make the poor sinner tremble, but O the mercy of it that He should take such dealings with a poor sinner, with a wayward soul, that He should so

kindly correct and admonish, and that He should make His instructions effectual! "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way that thou shalt go; I will guide thee with mine eye". What a benefit that is! And then that He should enrich the soul with that precious gift of godly fear, the "fear of the Lord" which "is to hate evil" and to depart from it, and by which the man says, "How shall I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" And O the blessing of having this fear set before the eyes day after day! "I thy servant did fear the Lord from my youth."

"Then cry we to heaven with one loud accord
That to us be given the fear of the Lord"

O that our hearts may be made tender in that holy fear, that we may tremble at the approach of sin, that we may fear sinning against God, grieving the Holy Spirit, and fear grieving the hearts of the people of God, or bringing any reproach upon His name and cause. And it is well to have the heart made tender in the fear of God - a precious gift.

"Blessed be the Lord who daily loadeth us with benefits". Then there is the great benefit of union and communion with the people of God. O what a favour this is! To have acquaintance with godly friends, to have acquaintance with the people who have understanding in spiritual things, and whose counsel and whose example and whose testimonies are from time to time very profitable to the soul. A wonderful favour is that! O prize the opportunities you have of associating with those who fear God, those who have been for many years on pilgrimage. It is good to seek their company; it is good to sit at their feet. May we count it among the great benefits the Lord has bestowed upon us that in our short life we have been connected with some of His choice ones whose memory still is dear to us.

"Blessed be the Lord who daily loadeth us with benefits". And then, further than that, that He should have brought poor sinners such as we are into some experience of intercourse with Himself, that He should have communicated to us somewhat of His mind and will, and enabled us to hold intercourse with Him. Wonderful this, that sinful dust and ashes should be thus favoured. "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ".

"Blessed be the Lord who daily loadeth us with benefits". Consider too, those favours the Lord bestows upon His people in a way of deliverance from time to time. "Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver and her feathers with yellow gold". Do you know what it is to be thus lifted up? When you

felt a poor, broken, worthless thing, broken by sin, broken under the tempter's assaults, broken by many sorrows and tribulations, feeling that you could never look up again, that being such a sinner, you cannot know anything of peace or true happiness again, and then the Lord has come. "Arise, shine", for thy light is come and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee". O what a wonderful benefit it is to get lifted up out of such low places, and to have light shed upon our dark matters, and into our dark dungeons. "Blessed be the Lord who daily loadeth us with benefits", - delivering mercies - for the Psalmist says, "even the God of our salvation", and His people are brought to know Him thus as "our God", and as the "God of salvation". There have been multitudes of people who have had their gods, but it could not be said of their gods that they were gods of salvation, for they could do nothing, they could not save themselves, let alone save their dupes, but "He that is our God", the living God, the only true God, "is the God of salvation". He does things for His people, He has a mighty arm, and He makes it bare on behalf of His people. He commands deliverances for His poor Jacobs. "Blessed be the Lord who daily loadeth us with benefits". Sometimes it is that His hand is seen in a turn in some providential matters, and O the power of His handiwork in providence when His hand is seen, and you can see how the Lord has been working here, and working there, doing this, and doing that, providing a way here, and providing a way there, and leading a whole set of circumstances up to one point where He appears wonderfully on behalf of His people.

"Who daily loadeth us with benefits". Then again, when the soul is in darkness or temptation, walking in darkness and having no light, and cannot see the path ahead, cannot be assured of any good issue to his matters at all, then the Lord appears, shines upon the whole of the matter, and that which appeared so crooked is now straight, and that matter so dark now shines like noon-day. "Blessed be the Lord". It is wonderfully sweet when the Lord by His operations draws out such seekings and such confessions as these from the soul. "Blessed be the Lord who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. Selah". And then to see this, that these various dealings of God with His poor people are all in love to their souls, in love to their souls. One says, "Thou has in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption". The Lord deals with His people as He does because He loves them. He pours out His love to them in lovingkindness, in delivering mercies. He brings them up out of the prison and out of the prison house, from the horrible pit and the miry clay because He loves them. The poet very truly and sweetly writes,

"Yet He in the furnace loves thee,
'Tis expressed in words like these,
I am with thee
Israel passing through the fire"

"He that is our God is the God of salvation". O he is able to deliver, He is able to do that for His people which is for their good. Nothing is too hard for the Lord. "He knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations", "He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think", able to keep you from evil and present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. O what ability the God of salvation has, what power to save!

"Unto God the Lord belong the issues from death". What a great word that is! O what a word for poor people to hang upon! Was it not this upon which the Apostle Paul was taught to hang when He said, "We have the sentence of death in ourselves that we should not trust in ourselves but in God which raiseth the dead". I have at times been thankful for such Scriptures, "God which raiseth the dead". "Unto God the Lord belong the issues from death". And you remember the Psalmist says, "Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth, as when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth. But mine eyes are unto thee, O God the Lord: in thee is my trust; leave not my soul destitute." He was taught where to look, even to Him to whom belong the issues from death. Do you know what death is, death felt in your soul, death upon everything? You look within and you fear what meets your gaze as you look thus, nothing better than a charnel house of death and corruption, but "unto God the Lord belong the issues from death". "Can these bones live?" "O Lord God, thou knowest". And you know in that wonderfully sweet chapter what the Lord did. Dry bones were raised and clothed with flesh. "O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord". "These bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts". But the case was not too much for the Lord. "Unto God the Lord belong the issues from death", and I believe these people often have occasion to bless Him for this as He revives them again and again.

"When restless sin and raging hell
Have struck their comforts dead",

when evidences are dark and they hardly have a good desire, when all seems lost and they fear they shall never, never know a resurrection, then "unto God the Lord belong the issues from death". "Blessed be the Lord". O He is to be blessed! His name is worthy to be praised for the great and merciful and mighty things He does for His poor

people. And He will complete the work, He has power to bring His people through all the vicissitudes and perils of this present toilsome pilgrimage, bring them with safety and honour to the end, and land them safe in glory, giving them the victory over the last enemy, which is death. One says,

"He from the grave my dust will raise;
I in the heavens will sing His praise;"

for "unto God the Lord belong the issues from death". May the Lord add His blessing. Amen.

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