

## Contrast between Earthly and Heavenly Blessing

Ephesians 1; Psalms 103 to 107.

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### **Part Second. EARLIER MINISTRY.**

Having considered on previous Wednesdays the blessings in Psalms 32 and 40, it is now my wish to look at the bearing of the blessedness brought in the Psalms on the heart, and to see the contrast in the character of blessing for the saint in the earthlies, and the saint in the heavenlies.

Two things need to be remembered: First, the position of blessedness belongs to the one man, Christ Jesus, the Son of God, who becomes the root of blessing to others; secondly, this blessing is meant to bear upon the heart of man, that it may go back to God in praise. God does not give His glory to another; but in giving, He so gives that it is all to go back to Him in the perfect enjoyment of Himself, to His own praise. There is more in this than in the thought the censer conveys, because the censer is not capable of enjoyment. God is steady, immovable in His purposes of mercy. Even in the rain which He gives, causing the verdure to spring up, we see it. Blessing He will give, and, give it so that He lays the blessing on the heart; and so lays it, that the heart enjoys it, and gives it back to God in praise. God's creative power has come into the soul; the man revels in the enjoyment of it, and says, "Here it is; I give it back to thee in praise." Thus it goes up to God.

Now we will look a little at the earthly and heavenly blessings contained in Psalm 103 to 107. We get millennial blessedness. Psalm 102 shows Christ as the shifter of the scenes of the dispensations: "Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end."

Then follows the burst of praise from Psalms 103, 104, 105, — all praise from earth. When God has done it, there is nothing to do but to light the censer of praise, and waft it back to God who has done it. David could praise, not of David, but of God. I have done nothing, he would say, nothing but failure; but thou hast done it all. "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name." When we can speak of nothing else, we can speak of God. In Psalm 103 David is tracing up to the root of things. Higher and higher the soul mounts in scaling, as it were, this mercy, which, after all, is beyond all measure. Thou hast redeemed my life from destruction, fed me, cared for me, guarded me; but, after all, I cannot measure it: "As far as the east is from the west." Man's widest span would be but a poor rule for that mercy which is from everlasting to everlasting. Verse 13 shows that the tenderness of His love is parental: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him." Such being His mercy, the practical claim upon the heart is founded on it: "Bless His holy name."

One thing is to be remarked here. It is not merely the ascription of blessing by David to God, but the Spirit of God in David uses the blessing given in order to return praise. It is one thing to make a harp, and another thing to play on it. There are two senses in which the word blessing is used — a man

laying his hand upon an instrument to command blessing, and another thing is the speaking well of His blessing. As poor sinners we may bless God, who, instead of destroying us with the thunderbolt of His wrath, has thought what He could do for us, and has given His Son. David here enters into the blessedness of God, and tastes it for Himself. What a God He is to give such a Son! Is not this the thought running through Psalm 103, that the poor sinner entirely ruined has found God as the God of *mercy*? that a man who had done every evil, even murder, has so tasted of the springs that are in the God of mercy that he can rejoice in it as the blessing rushes into the soul? In Him is the living water, just what I want, pure in itself, though the channel is full of mud; and this living water washes up plenty of the rubbish, and shows me more and more of the evil I have in myself. And can we not each say, This God of mercy, this mercy in God, suits me? The height, and breadth, and depth of it I cannot scan; the heart of another does not equal it. It is from everlasting to everlasting.

Psalm 104 is another thing. In Psalm 103 it is the man upon earth. Psalm 104 is a man upon earth still (Christ being the only way of blessing, as at all times); but here it is the soul admiring the goodness of God in connection with providence, taking, like a dove, a wide flight around all creation, as the work of Him in whom it has found mercy and can rest. In Psalms 105 and 106 there is a difference — 105 being connected with God's dealings in breaking down Israel as individuals and families, and bringing them out from the nations, and at length into Canaan. The Ps. 106 refers to Israel, as the nation put in a particular place as the centre, and closes with their being broken down and brought into blessing. God has marked off one spot of land to be the centre of the blessing to the earth. First, there was Eden; but when He separated the sons of Adam He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. (Deut. 32: 8.) The eye of the Lord could look on this good land, though now He has made the rock to grow up through the fertile soil. An infidel once threw it in the teeth of a Christian with whom he was conversing, as to the barren condition of the land, that it was impossible it could ever have teemed with inhabitants. His companion asked him whether if the land were burned with fire, and afterwards watered with blood, it could not give fertility to the soil? On his answering in the affirmative, Scriptures were shown to him which prove that God will use these measures.

All these psalms bring out failure on man's part, but all mercy on God's part. He still has a bit of land He calls His own. "I lent it to you," He says to Israel; "but I have cast you out of it for your disobedience." But the land is the object of God's heart now, scene of contest as it is at the present time.

Psalm 107. Now God is seen from north to south, east to west; and when the people did not know what to do, but were at their wit's end, *He was there*.

Psalm 103. The highest names by which God was known to Israel are in this psalm — God, Jehovah, and God-Jehovah. It is different in Ephesians. The Son of God is a title used in Scripture in many different senses; as by creation Adam was called the son of God in Eden, and before that there were the sons of God, the angels; but God could not take any other from that scene which He had created to put upon it such honour. The term son of God applied to Adam (Luke 3: 38) would be in tracing his origin, as a finite being, to God, as the root of his existence.

When Israel is called His first-born, it is always in relation to providence. He dealt in mercy with creation when He sent that span of His providence, the bow in the cloud. All blessings to the nations come in connection with Israel — that was the chosen nation, and is called the son of God, expressive of its connection with God in providence. That could 'have an end, as we have seen — the nations not recognizing the centre now; but there is one other sense altogether different in which the title is applied; viz., Son of the Father, as spoken of in Ephesians. Israel had no doubt but Messiah was to be the *Son of God*; they had no idea at all of His being the Son of the *Father*. He spoke to them of the Son

of man, but they could not at all understand how He (that pitiful Son of man) was going to be "crucified through weakness." The light which shone down upon Israel was all from the throne of God as Creator. They were not able to go up, as it were, above the throne. They knew not the relationship of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, although they did know the glory of the Trinity as God, Son, and Spirit. The Son of the Father was a new name, never revealed until Jesus was about to leave the earth, and claim it in connection with His Church. This brings out the difference between the Jew, the man of the earth, and the heavenly man, the Christian. *Mercy* is a little tasted by the Israelite on earth, and by the man in the heavenlies. Mark the evenness of God's way; His ways do not change. When God shut the door on Paradise He brought in mercy. There have been many dispensations, but never did God give blessing under any of them save by mercy. No power but by the Spirit of God, no way of mercy but this — "the seed of the woman." In Abel's sacrifice this was brought out, however uninstructed he may have been about it. In faith he took a lamb to represent this seed of the woman. To us (as in the heavenlies) Christ is known, not as our Lord and our God, blessed as that is, but as the Son of the Father; and the Spirit is to us not only as "eyes running to and fro through the earth," but as the *seal*, the earnest of the inheritance. Now in the broad daylight we can look up to the throne of the Father and see His beloved Son there. In Eph. it is all appropriated mercy. I would just ask, How comes it that you cannot speak well of God? A worldly man cannot, the Christian can. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost have done all for him; but the disciple says, "Alas! how sadly I fail in doing it!" The reason of this is, that you have not got to the end of yourself, you have not come to this point, that you know God does not think you worth speaking about. That is what you want, to make you ready to speak well of God. Again, you cannot hasten the work (this in which God is dealing with your souls in breaking you down), and no one can shorten it for you. I see in Paul, John, etc., that they had learnt to have Christ foremost, and self in the background. I must leave myself in God's hand, to be slow or quick as He may please. The process will not advance while I attempt to hurry it. If a man struggles in the water he may sink, but if he throws himself flat on his back he will float on, and come to shore at last.

Eph. 1: 3. The apostle here begins *with God*. It is a great thing to say, My sins are forgiven me; but it is more to say that the Father of our Lord Jesus has planned such a scheme of mercy by which He is glorified by His pardon. In Psalm 103 I get mercy dropping down from above; in Ephesians I get the source and beginning of it. "Blessed be the God and Father," etc. Let me ask you, Where does your gospel begin? This is in heaven, "spiritual blessings in heavenly places." Psalm 103 was the highest note of praise a Jew could raise; but David's window was open towards the north, and he saw all the promise of earthly blessings; but our window is over our heads, heavenwards. Stephen looked straight up into heaven. I can say too (v. 3), All is mine. It is a different thing to be like David, knowing how mercy suits me when I have failed in everything; or like Paul, who knew he was just the person suited for God. "I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering," etc. The reason saints are not more happy and settled in soul is, because they do not see the aspect in which they stand before God, in connection with His mercy; and they look upon God as dealing out His mercy to them on earth, instead of seeing God is in heaven, seeking those in whom He can display His mercy. I have not only found mercy as a ruined sinner, but I have found God, who is rich in mercy, and who says that I as a sinner suit Him. God wants sinners. I am a weak one in whom He may show forth His character of mercy; but I am one. I, a sinner, want God, and God wants me to show forth His mercy in. We need to be grounded in God's *mercy*. David learnt it in the place in which he was set. (See 2 Sam. 23) "Although my house be not so with God, yet He hath made me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure." The mark of what is fit for God is not found in me, but in Christ. He is gone up on high, *accepted*, and so I in Him, not so Israel. The leading thought in Scripture is mercy; it is in mercy He has plucked brands out of the burning; and when He wanted one to send amongst the Gentiles to

take His special revelation, He chose one that had been a blasphemer and injurious, etc.; and when he would send to the hard and stiff-necked Jews He took the one who was even dashing on in his impetuosity, blundering, cursing, and then denying his Lord.

What a school had these two passed through, to fit them to set forth the suitability of poor lost ones to display God's mercy. I do hold that people (saints in the heavenlies) are bound *to sing*. A man in the temple of Jerusalem, set as a singer, what had he to do but to *sing*? He might get out of tune, but he was bound to sing. If you let self and circumstances come in, you will never sing, but if occupied with God and Christ, you will never be out of tune. The more broken in heart and spirit I am, the more deep cause I have to sing of Him (of course we must not express feelings we have not, this would be hypocrisy); but if I sing of what Christ has done I may sing from the bottom of the pit. We may often confound joy of feeling with power of praise, but they are quite distinct. May we have that oil of gladness on the surface of our souls that it may be an easy thing to praise Him!