

The Condition of Blessing

Psalms 32, 51.

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Part Fourth. LATER MINISTRY.

A man may stand for himself, and not for God, and then he finds all God's power against him; or he may stand for God, and then God's power is with him. This you see in Psalm 32. But sometimes a man will choose to renounce self, and to get into God's circumstances. Then comes the question of walk, and often the same thing comes out with us as with David in Psalm 51. But then we find that God is above it, turning everything to His own praise. He who stands for his own integrity, stands for himself. God saw David very differently from what David saw himself in the beginning of this Psalm 32 His own works and words would not do to present before God, and that was all he could do; and he did not know then how God would triumph over sin and transgression.

But God turns his thoughts outwards from David to God, and then he found he had to do with a pardoning God, who would only deal with him according to what He knew him to be. Look at it in principle, and you will see that the first state must be inferior to the second. Look at Adam in the garden. He had nothing for eternity. It is a creature's blessing for time. If I take Mary Magdalene, the poor woman who was a sinner, or a John lying on his Master's bosom, I see the eternal God there letting out His own heart. I would rather be a poor sinner loved by Christ, and washed in His blood, than have to start again all alone in Eden, if I could. But mark, after David got into the light there is then perfect liberty. The heart by nature stands for self, and it gets nature's fare. Self is inside, and I am in perfect restraint in God's presence. Not so if I get out of what nature is into what God is, and know the fulness of His forgiveness welling forth out of His heart.

Psalm 51 shows how God deals with one whom He has taken up. Now God counts flesh totally worthless, and sets it aside. We want intercourse with a living Christ in heaven. This psalm is read as though it were one of hopelessness, though there is no psalm in which there is such hope and confidence of the soul that knows its springs to be in God, in the midst of the consequences of its own utter failure. He quickly passes in review all the details of his life, and shows that his thoughts of things are the same as God's. In the spirit of perfect confidence he has not a word to say for himself. God having made Himself ours, leads us on, and is for us. This is the thing to admit, that one has sinned, that the very clay of which we are formed is bad. God can bring a clean thing out of an unclean. Who but He can? or make the crooked straight? And who can keep a man of God from falling? or if he does fall, can restore him? None but God. How in the Scriptures one finds failure come in, even at the close of the course of God's servants — Noah, Moses, Solomon, Hezekiah, Peter, Paul!

Verse 13. His eye turns on what was in God's heart; God was for bringing a people near. David finds that in all God's dealings with him He has been forming him for Himself. God brought him down to this by discipline. It is wonderful how, in dealing with His saints, God lets nothing escape that can fit them to be acceptable to Himself. When God had dealt with David in the wilderness, David knew he was a poor worthless thing; then he had a broken and a contrite heart. Man would say he was worthless now, not so God. David had now mean thoughts of himself, and great thoughts of God. God uses circumstances down to the very failure of His saints to form, break, and smash, all that He does not

like, till fit for an offering for Himself. God is nearer. to us than our circumstances, and His purpose in them is quite distinct from Satan's, who will often draw a bow at a venture, if haply it may strike between the joints of the armour; and God would turn that dart aside if it were not needed to show out something He could not delight in. But God is nearer far to you than Satan who let fly the arrow. See Job, when he abhorred himself in dust and ashes; then God can come in and say, "It is all past now; I will speak of your patience. You have lost children. Well, I will give you others. I am not afraid now of showing you Who is at the back. Now that you are brought down in your own conceit, and will see in it all the power and love of God only, I can show that I was always your Blesser by blessing more richly in the end than at the beginning."

Oh, if we could see God in the thousand grits of sand that He picks up in the wilderness to break and wear us down with, we should not fret under things as we do; we should take God's side of the question. What was Solomon's greatest wisdom? Taking God's ways as the clue to what he should ask for; asking to be fit to fill the place God had put him in. "Speak, Lord, and let thy servant hear" — this should be our attitude. That is our wisdom, to have no will of our own, but to take up the mind of God. Christ had told Paul not to go up to Jerusalem in the energy of his heart for Israel. He would go up, and there becomes a prisoner; but the very night afterwards the Lord comes in and shows Himself with him. "If my servant is a prisoner, I will be with him as such." Paul found out his own folly, and what a Master he had got. Directly he is crippled, and a prisoner, he is brought before kings and rulers, and assimilated to the life of Christ as he never was before. Peter again says that he will wear the crown of martyrdom, and Christ says that he shall win it indeed, but against his own will. The bruising is to be done with what God and Christ will. This is what sweetens every step of the way to the heart of a Christian. Are your circumstances never trying? Does your sandal never hurt? Is your girdle never too tight? Now, do you chafe against it? or do you feel content to be ground down by God, to be fit for the place God has for you? Contrite means ground down. God has taken up His people to bless them, and to make them inwardly what will fit them to be in His presence with comfort and joy.