

"Blessed in Him."

BY C. H. SPURKON.

Men shall be blessed in him.—Psalm 73 : 17.
My first remark concerning the text is, that it makes mention of a singular condition: "Men shall be blessed in him."

It is a singular condition to be blessed, for, by nature, men are not blessed. We are born under a curse. Our first father turned aside the blessing when he disobeyed God's command, and in the early dawn of the day of our race, he darkened our sky once for all. The curse still abides upon man, that in the sweat of his face he shall eat bread, and upon woman, that in sorrow she shall bring forth children. How much woe lies in the curse that falls upon us in consequence of our own personal sin! "Who slew all things"—these comforts and joys of life? Oftentimes they have been slain by a man's own hands, through his own sin, or through the sins of those who surround him. The trail of the old serpent is everywhere. You cannot open your eyes without discovering that man is not blessed, but oftentimes abides under the curse. Put that truth down before you, and then read the text, "Men shall be blessed in him." Apart from him, they are accursed; they wring their hands and wish they had never been born, and some sigh and sorrow almost without ceasing. Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward, and it is a singular thing that any man should be blessed, so singular, that no man ever is blessed until he comes to be connected with the Lord Jesus Christ: "Men shall be blessed in him."

Many people who forget all about the curse, nevertheless acknowledge that they are unhappy. Go up and down amongst the whole race of men, and how few you will find really happy! I believe that none are truly happy until they are in Christ; but even if they were happy, that is not the word that is used in our text. It does not say, "Men shall be happy in him." It gives us a fuller, deeper, richer word than that: "Men shall be blessed in him." To be more happy, may be a thing of time and of this world only; I do not mean that the happiness may not be true and real, but still, compared with all that the word "blessed" implies, the word "happy" has no eternity, no depth, no fullness, no force in it. So that, even if men were happy, they would not come up to the fullness of the promises in our text. But, alas! the mass of men are unhappy—sighing for this, and mourning for that, never blessed, but only hoping to be so. The text, therefore, comes in with its sweet silvery ring, telling that men shall cease to be unhappy, and that they shall rise even above merely being happy, and they shall come to be "blessed in him."

Let me tell you what Christ does for a man who is really in him, and then you will see how he is blessed. The man who comes to Christ by faith, and truly trusts Christ, has all the past rectified. All his sins, whatever they may have been, are pardoned in a moment as soon as he believes in Jesus Christ the Son of God. His iniquities are blotted out, and are as if they had never been committed. As the cloud passes away, and is no more to be seen, so the thick clouds of our sins are dispersed by Christ as soon as we believe in him. Nor will they ever return to darken our sky. The forgiveness which God gives is not temporary, but eternal. Once pardoned, you are pardoned forever; the act of divine amnesty and oblivion stands fast forever and ever. Is not that man truly blessed, then, who is made free from sin? David says, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and whose spirit there is no guile." This is the blessedness which Christ gives to those who are in him, that, as for the past, in its entirety, with all its blackness, with all its aggravated sin, he has taken it upon himself, and borne the penalty due on account of it, and he makes a clean sweep of it, and says of the man who trusts in him, "Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven; go in peace." That is one part of the blessedness of those who are in Christ, the past is all forgiven.

At the same time, the man who is in Christ receives present favor. As soon as we truly believe in Jesus, there steals over our heart a delicious rest, according to his gracious invitation and promise, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And as we go on to serve the Lord, and take his yoke upon us, and learn of him, we find rest unto our souls, for his yoke is easy, and his burden is light. I believe that, oftentimes, a child of God, when he realizes his union to Christ, feels so blessed that he does not know of anything that could make him more blessed than he is. He says, "I am perfectly content with my Lord, and with what I am in him. With myself, I am always dissatisfied, and always groaning because I cannot entirely conquer sin; but with my Saviour I am always satisfied, I am triumphant in him, and rejoicing in him, indeed, blessed in him." Some of you know what a blessed thing it is to be a child of God, and an heir of heaven, how blessed it is to have the throne of grace where you can take your troubles, and to have a Helper who is strong enough to deliver you. I spoke, the other day with a Christian friend, and I said to him,

"My life sometimes seems to be like that of a man walking upon a tight rope. The walk of faith is very mysterious; one false step, or one slip, and where should we be?" My friend replied, "Yes, it is so, no doubt; but then, underneath are the everlasting arms." Ah! that is a blessed addition to the figure; there is no slipping off the rope on which God calls us to walk; but if there were, underneath are the everlasting arms, and all is well; and the Christian, when he knows that, and lives as one should live who is in Christ, is even now a truly blessed man.

But that is not all, for he who believes in Christ has his future guaranteed. He does not know how long he shall live, and he does not want to know; and as he knows it, it is better than our knowing it. Whether our life is long or short, he will be with us unto the end, and as our days our strength shall be. He will sanctify to us every trial we meet, and nothing shall by any means harm us. He will bring us safely to our journey's end, and we shall go through the cold death-stream without a fear; we shall rise triumphant on the shore of the hill country on the other side, and we shall behold our Saviour's face without a veil between forever and forever. All this is an absolute certainty if we are the children of God, for it is not possible that one of the divine family should perish, that one bought with the blood of Christ should ever be cast away. He will keep his own, and preserve them even to the end. Are they not blessed, then, and is not the text full of sweetness as to this singular condition, "Men shall be blessed in him?"

Where are you, ye blessed men and women? Where are you? Come and enjoy your blessedness; do not be ashamed to be happy. I do believe that some Christians are a little frightened at themselves when they find that they are full of joy; and if, perchance, they should ever break through the rules of decorum, and express their joy; then they turn crimson. It was not thus with the saints of old, for sometimes they spoke and sang so loudly of the joy of their hearts that even their adversaries said, "The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad," and again they lifted up their hallelujahs. Then were their mouths filled with laughter, and their tongues with singing. So let it be with you, for you are indeed a blessed people if you are in Christ.

Now I want to dwell for a minute or two, for the exaltation of our Lord, upon the full assurance which is expressed in this text: "Men shall be blessed in him."

The prophet speaks here, my brethren, in a very positive manner; there is no quiver in his voice, there is no hesitancy about his speech. I am afraid that, at the present moment, there are some even of godly men who tremble for the ark of the Lord; and the hand of Uzzah is visible here and there. But the ark of the covenant of the Lord needs no steady hand from you or from me; the cause of truth is always secure, for God preserveth it. Let us not be afraid, neither let us be discouraged. It is a grand thing to get a sentence like this with a "shall" in it: "Men shall be blessed in him." "It is not," "perhaps they may be," but "Men shall be blessed in him." Not, "perchance they may be blessed under certain conditions;" but, "Men shall be blessed in him."

This means, in the first place, they shall not try him and fail. There never was a man, who came to Christ, who failed to get a blessing from him. There never was one who believed in Jesus, and yielded himself up to the gracious sway of the Prince of Love, who did not get a blessing from him. I have never met with a Christian yet who, in life or in death, has said, "I have been disappointed in Christ. He has deceived me. I sought and hoped for blessedness, but I have missed it." Never can this be said truly. "Men shall be blessed in him." If they do really come to him they shall not miss this blessedness.

Nay, I go further, and say that they shall not desire him, and be denied. There was never a soul that desired to be blessed in Christ, and was willing to yield itself up to Christ, that Christ did ever reject. There is no one in hell who can truthfully say, "I came to Jesus and he spurned me;" and there never shall be one such, for it is written, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." The foot that was nailed to the cross never spurned a sinner yet. The hand that was pierced never pushed away a penitent. Christ is all invitation, there is no rejection about him, he constantly bids sinners to come unto him, and this text is true for you, whoever you may be, "Men shall be blessed in him."

I am glad to go as far as that, and to say that none who ever came to Christ failed to get a blessing from him, and that none who desire to come to him have ever been denied by him; but I am going still further. "Men shall be blessed in him," that is to say, they shall come to Christ and get the blessing. Some, alas! will not come to him; but, O sirs, if any of you refuse to come do not make any mistake about the matter! You think that by refusing his invitation you will thwart Christ and defeat the purposes of God; by no manner of means. The King's wedding feast, shall be furnished with guests; and if you who are hidden will not come there are others who will; he will send his servants out into the highways and hedges to compel others to come in, that his house may be filled. Do not imagine that

the result of the death of Christ depends upon you, and that it is in your power to prevent the accomplishment of the almighty purposes of the Saviour's love. Nay, nay; "He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied." If ye believe not, I must say to you what Christ said to the Jews, "Ye believe not, because ye are not of his sheep." His sheep hear his voice and he knows them, and they follow him, and he gives unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish. "All that the Father giveth me," saith he, "shall come to me." Not one of those whom God has given to his Son shall be left to perish; they shall all come to him, and so the text shall be fulfilled, "Men shall be blessed in him." Do not imagine that when Jesus hung there on yonder bloody tree and groaned away his life for men he was dying at a peradventure. There was at the back of him the eternal purpose and the covenant that cannot be changed, and the invincible One who, without violating the will of God, making men willing in the day of his power, turning them from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and Satan unto God.

Be of good courage, my brethren; the consequences of redemption are not left in jeopardy. Those results which God has purposed will, to the last jot and tittle be fulfilled. "Men shall be blessed in him." It is not to me a question whether Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands to God; she shall do it though I may not live to see it. It is not to me a question whether the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; they must become his. Let us work in this confidence, and believe every promise in this blessed Book. If we get down-hearted and full of fear, we are unworthy of our Lord. If we served a temporal prince with limited power, we might talk with bated breath; but the banner that gleams on high, above our ranks, is the banner of the Lord God omnipotent, and the shout that shall be heard at the last is this: "Alleluia! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." I ask you, is it not very natural that he should reign? If he really be omnipotent, are not all the certainties as well as the probabilities, in favor of his universal dominion? Must he not reign? Yea, saith the Spirit, "He shall reign forever and ever." "Men shall be blessed in him." There is the tone of full assurance about this blessed prophecy; wherefore, let us rejoice and praise the name of the Lord.

Now, lastly, I want you with all your hearts to think of my text with a personal appropriation: "Men shall be blessed in him."

Dear hearers, are you blessed in Christ? Will you personally answer the question? Do not pass it round and say to yourself, "No doubt there are many who think that they are blessed and who are not." Never mind about them; for the present moment ask this question of yourself, "Am I blessed in Christ?" Some people think that they have Christ as their Saviour, but their religion brings them no blessedness. They go to church or to chapel very regularly; they are, apparently, a good sort of people; but a part of their religion consists in being on the whole as comfortably miserable as they can. As to anything like "blessedness," that does not enter into their minds. Now, if my religion did not make me really happy I should seriously question whether I was a possessor of the religion of the happy God, for "Men shall be blessed in him."

"Oh!" says one, "but we have so many trials and troubles." Ah, that we have! Do you know a man or woman who does not get any? I should like you to mark all the doors in London where people live who have not any trouble; it will not cost you much for chalk. There is nobody without trouble. If a man could be without trouble, he would be without a blessing, for in this world one of the rarest blessings, one of the richest, truest blessings that God ever sends to his children, is adversity. He sends more blessings upon the black horse than he ever sends upon the grey one; it is the messenger of sorrow who often brings the choicest jewels to our door. Ah! there is many a woman who has not left her bed these dozen years, or had a fair night's rest all that long time, who is truly blessed. There is many a man who is as poor as poverty can make him, shivering in the cold to-night, and scarcely knowing where to find another bit of coal to keep his little fire afloat; yet he is blessed. If it were necessary, I could get some of you to stand up, and testify that, though you have very little of this world's joys, and very little of temporal good, yet you can say, "Yes, I am blessed, I am blessed indeed—"

"I would not change my best estate,
For all that earth calls good or great;
And while my faith can keep her hold
I envy not the sinner's gold."

Well, you have that blessedness, then, enjoy it. What would you think of a man who went thirsty when he had a well in his back yard? O you have Christ and God, this world and worlds to come, and whom God has pronounced blessed—what are you going to live the starveling life of the unblest and the unavaid? I pray you, do not so. Gentlemen, live according to your quality! Peers of the upper house, for you are such if you are born again, I beseech you, act in accordance with your true nobility. Hath not Christ made you

princes and kings, at reign with him for ever upon your heads, and as I am blessed indeed, cause of him."

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