

SATISFIED AT LAST

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

There are two problems with which we are constantly confronted in life; one is the good fortune of bad men, and the other is the bad fortune of good men. In the providential distribution of favors, there seems to be an utter disregard of the character or worthiness of the ones receiving the favors. This, however, prevails only in this life on earth. In the final adjustment every one will receive a just recompense of reward, whether it be good or evil, according to his deeds.

In vain people look to the world for satisfaction. Do you seek riches? If so, they will serve to intensify your discontent by increasing your longing for more. Do you court earthly honors? If so, you need to know that they are but empty bubbles that rapidly vanish and leave the seeker after them in cruel disappointment. Do you depend upon earthly wisdom? Even though it yields great pleasure to its possessor, yet each acquisition of knowledge opens to the student a larger field for exploration and awakens in him an insatiable thirst for the unknown. Men who are in the valley think if they were at the top of such a hill they should touch the heavens. Men that are in the valley think if they were at the top of such a hill they should touch the heavens. Men that are in the depths of poverty or pain think if they could get up to such a mountain, such a measure of riches, honors, and delights, they could reach happiness. Solomon got to the top of this hill and seeing so many scrambling and laboring so hard to reach it said: "Sirs, ye are all deceived in your expectations; I see the pains ye take to get up to this place, thinking that when you come hither, ye shall touch the heavens and reach happiness, but I am before you at the top of the hill. I have treasures and honors and pleasures in variety and abundance, and I find the hill full of quagmires instead of delights, and so far from giving me satisfaction that it causeth much vexation. Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

How transitory and unsatisfying are all worldly pleasures and pursuits! Whoever depends upon them for real happiness will be sadly disappointed. Turn away from the earthly to the heavenly. Look to God for happiness and joy. The scriptural injunction is, "Delight thyself in the Lord."

A Christian should not expect perfect satisfaction in this life. Sin is all about us. Its consequences and influences are keenly felt. Society is in a mixed and confused state. In the transactions of business and in the contacts with people we are compelled to endure the beastly conduct and defiled lives of those who are far below the standard of Christian manhood and womanhood. There are misunderstandings, differences, and evils which make this life unsatisfactory even to the Christian. The very moment you take from him the prospective element in religion that moment you make him unhappy. "If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable." But blessed be the name of Christ, the Christian has two lives: the earthly and the heavenly. He enjoys the one. He anticipates the other. The earthly has just enough of the bitter to increase in him a longing for the heavenly. Here he bears the cross. There he will wear the crown. Here he is contented, though not fully satisfied. He hopes for a changed condition of things. He longs for a better, richer, and sweeter life to come, and while he is comforted with the prospect, he is contented with the richest experiences and joys which are but foretastes of heaven.

Three years ago, little Billy was born; a perfectly normal baby, so the parents thought. But a few days after his birth, they knew that something was wrong. His face became expressionless, his eyes motionless, his body still, and his lips pale. Their precious baby had become a pathetic and apparently hopeless invalid.

Day after day, and week after week, his mother, with breaking heart, tenderly cared for him." But, not long ago, a doctor pierced Billy's frail little arm, injected thirty-five cents' worth of Neostigmine and suddenly a glorious transformation took place. The muscles of his usually limp little body twitched, his lips quivered, and his eyes began to move.

"Oh, doctor, look, look," cried the mother, "Billy's coming to life!"

Even the British neurologist who chanced upon the correct remedy was amazed at the child's recovery.

Now Billy toddles about the room without his steel braces. He proudly eats a dish of cereal all by himself, and talks with his parents just like other little boys.

But this modern miracle of a wonder drug is as nothing when compared with the miraculous change that will take place in all of God's children on the resurrection morning when "the dead in Christ shall rise first: and we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air."

This has been the hope of believers ere since that ancient day Job, the poet of patience, cried out: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." Neither tongue nor pen can describe the majestic wonder and the glory of that event.

In this seventeenth Psalm David tells of his many worldly enemies; some living extravagantly in the luxurious palace of King Saul; some pursuing him like wild hounds, seeking to crush out his life. And perhaps late at night, in the darkness of some mountain retreat, restless, unable to sleep, David calls out to God in prayer: "Oh, God, incline thine ear unto me. Keep me as the apple of thine eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings... from my deadly enemies who compass me about. Arise, O Lord....deliver my soul from the wicked, from men of the world who have their portion in this life."

And then the hunted fugitive looks beyond the darkness of the night, beyond the grave, to the hills of his celestial home, and triumphantly sings: "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." What a beautiful sentence! Let us place it beneath the microscope of faith and with the aid of the Holy Spirit examine its exquisite facets.

With Spirit-lit vision, David looks down the corridors of time to the moment of his:

I. Supreme Reward.

In rapture he cries out, "I shall be satisfied." "My enemies may feast at the banqueting table of the world; they may gather to themselves great wealth; they may bedeck themselves in the finest of raiment; they may move to and fro in the circle of earth's elite; they may have houses and land and cattle and all of the trappings that make for physical comfort; but I do not envy them. Their reward is of the earth and consequently transitory. As for me, I am building on a more solid foundation, the indestructible rock of my hope in God. My reward is of Him and therefore eternal. Their portion is of this life but mine constitutes the better part, for it is of the life to come."

David did not make the mistake of his enemies and look for his reward here. But he said, "After the strife is ended, after the struggle is over, when I stand in the court of the King of Heaven, I shall be satisfied."

God has so ordained it that we are never satisfied here. David's statement clearly implies that he was not satisfied at the time which he wrote it. Is not that the universal experience of man? Dissatisfaction is characteristic of the present life. Nothing here comes up to the full aspirations of the soul. Men are dissatisfied with what they know; for that reason they go to school. They are dissatisfied with what they have; for that reason they trade and traffic to better their conditions. There is dissatisfaction with many family relationships; hence, so much unhappiness. There is dissatisfaction with environment, circumstances, positions, and attainments. This is especially true with attainments in respect to character. Who is as good as he might be? As good as he ought to be? As good as he would like to be? There is dissatisfaction everywhere.

"Satisfied" is a beautiful word scarcely found in the literature of the world, because the world is unable to satisfy any man. Yet the word is used with great freeness in the scriptures, because God is able to satisfy any man. Satisfied means sufficiently filled, filled full, filled up in every part. The statement of the Psalmist in our text indicates that he believed there will be a time and place when he would find complete satisfaction and be entirely content.

David's statement has nothing to do with the present. He was looking beyond the grave to another world. He was full of faith. There was no perhaps about his words. With him it was not problematical, but a thing of which he was sure.

II. Sublime Resurrection.

"I shall be satisfied, when I awake." David fully expected to awake from the sleep of death. When this would take place he did not know, but of the certainty of his awaking, and of the nature of his appearance, he had no doubt whatever.

When the Psalmist mentions awaking, we immediately think of the darkness through which he had to pass. In the third verse we find a key to this text, when David says of the Lord: "Thou hast visited me in the night." His utterance was really a prayer offered in the darkness.

1. The darkness of suffering.

Ever since the day the old serpent injected his malign venom into Adam's bloodstream, pain has been the portion of the children of men. The two words "Passing away" are inscribed on these earthly tabernacles. You know darkness magnifies pain. What a change a few years will make in a man, especially when they are years of excruciating suffering!

2. The darkness of sorrow.

Few mortals are exempt from traveling that tearful valley. In his lyric of despair the patriarch of testing was able to endure the loss of his cattle, the destruction of his property, and the death of his servants, but when the messenger brought the sad tidings that his children had been killed, Job was crushed beneath the hand of sorrow.

3. The darkness of skepticism.

Surely this is the most somber darkness of them all. It is a demoniacal darkness, rising from the pit to engulf the minds and hearts of men. It is the darkness of materialism's humanistic philosophy, which tells us more and more of less and less, a darkness in which the beautiful flowers of faith will never grow, a darkness that stifles every holy impulse, a darkness that creates a vacuum in the soul of man and sends him stumbling through our jaded era bludgeoned and baffled, a darkness whose devotees advocate as the only hope of the world their unholy trinity--militarism, mechanism, and money.

Oh what a wondrous sunrise it will be when Jesus comes to scatter the darkness of the long, long night of suffering, sorrow, and skepticism!

If Christ does not return during my lifetime, I shall leave this world through the gateway of death. But some day I shall awake from the sleep of death. When, I do not know, but of the certainty of it there is no question. When I awake, I shall be rested, refreshed, and reinvigorated.

III. Sacred Revelation.

"With thy likeness." David was simply saying, "I will lack nothing when I behold the image of God."

Yes, Lord Jesus, "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." The imperfect soul can think of no standard more challenging than the perfect Christ. Some Christians have longed to be like Him in this life, but have found it impossible; yet they have continued in the hope that one day they shall reach that goal for which they have longed. In what sense can we hope to be like Him? In immortality, in glorified bodies, in holiness, in blessed fellowship, in knowledge, and in unbroken peace. What a great hope this is!

This is not the land of sight. It is too dark a country to see Christ well, for our eyes are not good enough. Here we walk by faith and not by sight. How different the sight of Him will be from what it is now. Here we see His face in the mirror of the Word--dimly in the Law, and gloriously in the Gospel. Here we see Him by reflection. Here we see Him only partially. There we shall see Him entirely. Here we see Him dimly and distantly. There we shall literally and actually look into His blessed face.

Our minds often revert to Christ as He was, and as such we have wished that we might have seen Him. We shall never see Him thus. Bethlehem's glories are gone forever; Calvary's glooms are swept away; Gethsemane's scene is dissolved; and even Tabor's splendors are quenched in the past. We cannot see Him as He was, but we have a larger promise, "We shall see Him as He is."

This hope that we, who are the children of God, shall in every respect be made wholly like our Saviour is real. It is not a faint desire, a mere wish or a doubtful surmise. It is a sure and certain hope. This glorious hope of being like Christ--perfect, conqueror over sin, death, and hell--is based upon the love of God, arises out of Christian sonship, and rests upon our union with Jesus Christ. We shall be like Him in character, sympathies, and aims. There will not be anything left to wish for and to strive to attain. And this blessedness will be eternal.

Such a satisfaction is not conceivable just as eternity is not conceivable, for the finite cannot grasp the immortal, but something within the soul bids man to rest his case in the hope of a better day and of a fuller understanding, and of a complete apprehension of the unreachd ideal.

We shall be satisfied with heaven as a place. We shall be satisfied with our associates in heaven, for they will consist of those whom Christ has saved and who have been transformed into His likeness. No impure thought, no evil desire, no unworthy motive, or no discordant element will ever be found in that circle of society. Perfect love and harmony will reign supremely and eternally. We shall be satisfied with our condition.