

## BLESSEDNESS IN PIETY

"Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord; that walketh in his ways" (Psalm 128:1).

Life holds for men many and varied quests. There is the quest for wealth, the quest of love, the quest of knowledge and of truth, the quest for fame and power, the quest of adventure and of excitement, and, above all and crowning all, the quest for righteousness, goodness, and the peace of God in the soul.

As an element in each of these high pursuits there resides a quest for happiness. In his delightful little book on happiness, Dr. William Lyon Phelps wrote: "No matter what may be one's nationality, sex, age, philosophy, or religion, everyone wishes either to become or to remain happy." The founders of our Republic wrote into the Declaration of Independence those unforgettable words, "The inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." If righteousness and the love of God are the supreme aims of life, eternal happiness is the reward thereof.

### I. The Meaning Of Blessedness.

The Psalmist said, "Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord." The words "bless" and "blessed" are found hundreds of times in the Old Testament. The family of words used preponderantly is one which means to bestow a blessing or the state of having been blessed thusly.

The word used in our text appears only twenty-seven times. It seems to be a special word referring to the inner condition of the one so blessed. It is akin to the English word "happy." It expresses more the idea found in the New Testament for "blessed" such as Christ used in the Beatitudes. One use of the Hebrew word is translated, "O the happiness!" That seems to imply that it was a superlative state of joy.

May we not then regard this state of blessedness as an inner sufficiency which enables you to live a full, rich, and serene life regardless of outward circumstances. That is what our Lord meant when He said: "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake" (Matthew 5:3-11).

So the Psalmist was talking about the inward peace which enables you to live life to its fullest. It is the peace that you can know in every one of life's storms.

It is strange that we are prone to think of blessings only in terms of material things. But such may be blights rather than blessings. Even the pagan Plato said, "Health, beauty, vigor, riches, and all other things called goods, operate equally as evils to the vicious and unjust, as they do as benefits to the just."

Wealth after all is a relative thing. The man who has little and desires less is wealthier than one who has much and desires more. More homes are destroyed by

wealth than by poverty. The Greek philosopher Epicurus said that "wealth consists not in having great possessions, but in having few wants."

So, even in the broader sphere, blessings may not necessarily be the good things which happen to you, but the bad things which never occur.

God's blessing may not be to protect us from the unhappy experiences of life. By His permissive will He may let His children walk through the valley. There is an old Spanish proverb to the effect that sooner or later every home will have its hush. It may be the hush of sickness, sorrow, or death. But in that hush God blesses with His presence, comfort, and strength. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me" (Psalm 23:4). God may permit His children to walk through --notice, "through," not "into," or "in" -- the valley of dim, dark shadows, but He never lets them walk alone.

No matter what the outward circumstances may be, the Psalmist says that every child of God and every Christian home may know the blessedness, the spiritual stamina, the inner strength, and the sufficiency which comes from God.

## II. The Conditions Of Blessedness.

"Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord; that walketh in his ways." "Feareth" means to revere. Here then are two conditions which govern the state of blessedness.

### 1. To revere the Lord.

To revere the Lord is to worship Him. For an individual or a family to be blessed of God it must be one that worships Him and obeys His will. For a family to be blessed of God, it must be one that hallows Him.

Let me illustrate this principle from the life of Abraham. He is called the father of the faithful. If you study his life, you will discover a very significant thing. Wherever he went, he built an altar and called upon the name of the Lord. "And the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him" (Genesis 12:7). "Unto, the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the Lord" (Genesis 13:4). "Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the Lord" (Genesis 13:18). "And they came to the place which God told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood" (Genesis 22:9). Abraham established a place for worship.

Only twice was a mention of building an altar lacking. One was when he went down to Egypt: "And there was a famine in the land: and Abraham went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land" (Genesis 12:10). The other was when he journeyed to Gerar: "And Abraham journeyed from thence toward the south country, and dwelled between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar" (Genesis 20:1).

### 2. To walk in the ways of the Lord.

Both times when Abraham tried to protect his own skin from heathen rulers

he got into trouble. He sought to pass off his wife, Sarah, as his sister. In both cases, when his ruse was discovered, he was rebuked by the heathen. He brought dishonor upon the name of Jehovah, and he damaged his own witness. Why? Because he failed to revere God and to walk in His ways.

Incidentally, the same thing happened to Lot. When he moved into Sodom he entered business and politics. His wife and two daughters joined the social set. But no mention is made of any altar that he built, at which to worship God. He did not bear any witness to Jehovah in Sodom.

What happened to that city is well known. Because of its wickedness God destroyed it. When God's angel told Abraham of His purpose the patriarch pleaded for Sodom. Finally, God promised to spare the city if ten righteous people could be found in Sodom. Abraham slept in the assurance that there were ten righteous people in Sodom, but not so.

Tragedy compounded tragedy! A city was destroyed. Lot's wife was destroyed. This was followed by drunkenness and incest. And the root of it all was that in Sodom Lot failed to build an altar and call on the name of the Lord.

If your family and home are to be blessed of God, it must be a home in which God is revered. You cannot expect to sow weeds and pluck flowers. If your home is dedicated to God, then in His presence you will find joy, peace, and righteousness that will bear the fruit of holiness unto Him.

If you will meet the required conditions of revering the Lord and walking in His ways, then God will bless you richly and use you effectively. In a sense revering the Lord and walking on His ways are two facets of the same thing. You do not really revere the Lord unless you walk in His ways. You cannot walk in His ways unless you hold Him in reverence. It involves both a condition of heart and a way of life. To revere is to worship, and worship should evolve into living. The two go hand in hand.

### III. The Fruits Of Blessedness.

It is certain that the true and loyal and faithful child of God will be rewarded abundantly. It is not certain as to exactly when or how he will receive his recompense. It may be partly in the present, or it may be largely in the future. It may be partly in the temporal and material realm. It may be largely in the spiritual realm -- cleansing the heart, elevating the character, and enjoying fellowship with the Lord.

There are certain blessings which God bestows upon those who revere Him and walk in His ways.

#### 1. Personal.

Personal godliness is both pleasant and profitable. The man who reveres God and walks in His ways has a satisfaction which cannot be equalled by anything else. The very duties which godliness requires have a tendency to procure the conveniences and comforts of life. Health, honor, and a good name are part of the recompense of revering God and walking in His ways. Concerning the man who does these things, the Psalmist said: "Happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee" (verse 2). The fear of God preserves him; the

Spirit of God controls him; and he is happy in God. The person who reveres God and walks in His ways shall not have to live by unworthy means, because God's blessings will be upon his honest toil. This is the happiest and best way to live.

2. Domestic.

"Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house; thy children like olive plants round about thy table" (verse 3). To the husband who reveres God and walks in His ways, the wife will be a treasure and a joy which nobody can confer and money cannot buy. True conjugal affection, the outgrowth of mutual esteem, is a source of lasting and elevating gladness of heart, for which all who possess it should give heartiest thanks to the Giver of all good gifts.

Children, which are precious gifts from God, should be treated as the most sacred charge placed in the hands of their parents. No one can tell the capacities and possibilities that are hidden in the heart of a child. The children are compared to the olive plants; they are symbols of vigorous, healthy, and joyous life. The mental, moral, and spiritual characteristics of children are dependent largely upon the parents. In speaking of parental bliss, the Psalmist said: "Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children" or thy grandchildren. This is suggestive of long life. It takes little imagination to see the joys involved in these promises.

3. Spiritual.

"The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion" (verse 5). "Zion" is suggestive of spiritual life, of God dwelling with His people in mercy and forgiveness. Such spiritual blessings are too numerous to mention in particular, but they may be summed up in righteousness, joy contentment and the tie that binds people together in love for God and love for one another. Spiritual people are not only blessed by the church, but they are also a blessing to it. They become identified with all its interests, mourn over its reverses, and rejoice in its successes.

These fruits of blessedness will be yours on the conditions that you revere the Lord and walk in His ways. Won't you meet these conditions?