

Sermon

by

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A lonely sinner's cry

to his God

Psalm 51 v 11 & 12

Sermon preached by Mr. John S. Green,
at Swavesey Chapel,
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“Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation; and uphold me with Thy free Spirit.”

Psalm 51 v 11 & 12

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If we have a poor, fearing, trembling, troubled soul here tonight, I would say, ‘As the Lord may help you read this Psalm, pray over it, and you may find that there is something in it that exactly fits your case.’ We need not be left to commit David’s sin. No! But as we hinted this morning we were conceived in sin, born in sin, shapen in iniquity. We have many proofs of this on our right hand and on our left, and some of us have the solemn proof of it in our own poor hearts. So if you are a seeker - if you are concerned about your latter end, the destiny of your precious soul - the Lord help you to ask for the same things that David asked for and grant you these blessings.

And those who are getting older and near the end of the journey, how these things suit them! I look back a good many years to when I first read this precious Psalm. I often read it now and I love it. It has been said it is one of the most precious portions of God’s Word; and it is, to a poor sinner distressed, almost distracted, fearing the Lord will have nothing to do with them, afraid He will cast them off. There is nothing I fear more than this - perhaps some of you fear the same - being cast away. “Cast me not away from Thy presence,” as you would cast something worthless and useless out of the way. God’s dear people feel sometimes worthless, useless, and they may fear that God will cast them away from His presence.

David had no doubt witnessed some sad things in his life. There was something very sad we read tonight: I thought we mustn’t miss that out, the sad and solemn things in it, we must read it; there was Saul who took his own life, lost forever, cast into hell. No repentance for those that take their own lives, thus no heaven! Earlier on we read of King Saul, near the borders of despair, goes to the witch of Endor; but we read there, God would have nothing to do with him: God would not answer him either by Urim or by Thummim.

Perhaps you may feel deep down in your heart, ‘Oh may the Lord never do that to me, never leave me!’ I think Peter, you know, after denying all knowledge of the dear Lord with oaths and curses, must have felt himself to have been in a fearful state and condition. But the Lord gave him a remarkable look. He didn’t cast him away from His presence; He didn’t say, ‘Peter I will have no more to do with you, you have denied Me.’ And He didn’t cast poor David off though he had sinned so much against the Lord.

What about you poor sinner? Does the little prayer suit you? Have you got those fears in your heart, caused perhaps by unbelief, by indwelling sin? Your life may be upright and sincere before men who may not be able to lay a finger against you, but it's what you see and feel within. Heart sinners! That's it, that's where the trouble lies.

In this Psalm David prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." People are satisfied generally with the outside being kept clean. Their life has been pretty circumspect; they think all is well. It isn't you know! "I the Lord search the heart." Man looketh upon the outward appearance, God looketh at the heart: and that's where the trouble lies with God's dear people. I don't say they may not have cause; I do not say they may not be overcome for a season by Satan; but their great trouble lies within, hidden from the view of all men, but not hidden from God. And thus as a poor sinner looks at himself and compares himself with God's word, feels what there is within, it makes him ask - it makes me ask - "Can ever God dwell here?" That's it! Then that will bring you into the text, "Cast me not away from Thy presence."

God would have been just if He had had no more to do with David. You may feel tonight He would be just if He had no more to do with you, and yet there is this prayer, "Cast me not away from Thy presence." Good Miss Steele I think it is says,

"Depart from Thee? – 'tis death – 'tis more;
'Tis endless ruin, deep despair!"

And that is true. Well my dear friends I wouldn't give much for that person's religion that hasn't got this prayer deep down within. No! To be self-satisfied, to be unconscious with what we are within, is a sad, sad state to be in. And as we grow older we don't grow any better. Some of us thought perhaps, years back, we should be different, there would be more overcoming grace, more of the subduing of the old nature. Well how is it? You won't grow any better this side of the grave. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit;" you can't mix them. God didn't cure the old man of sin; He could have done had it been His will, but it is His will that His dear people shall have that conflict within right to the end. I thought of those words in the Revelation where the redeemed in glory sing of victory, and the words of the Apostle Paul, "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory." There can't be any victory where there is no fight, I am sure of that; but with God's dear people it is a hard fight, it is a severe conflict which they feel, and they don't grow any better. And thus perhaps all they can say is, "Cast me - my poor soul - Cast me not away from Thy presence," but, "Have mercy upon me," forgive my sins, "Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin." How these things suit God's dear people! I think they reach their very case, they do indeed.

"Cast me not away from Thy presence." There is something very sacred about God's presence; something very wonderful to have the Lord's presence, maybe in trouble, maybe in affliction. They have losses and crosses, but O! if the Lord comes and grants His sacred presence, what a difference it makes! What a relief it affords the dear child of God! They seem to live in a different world when they have the Lord's gracious presence with them.

“In Thy presence I am happy;
In Thy presence I’m secure;
In Thy presence all afflictions
I can [cheerfully] endure.”

Have you ever had the Lord’s presence? I remember hearing a good man, years back, mention one of our hymns, that it says, “Sweet the moments, rich in blessing”. It doesn’t even say the days or the hours, months or weeks, but,

“Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,
Which before the cross I spend.”

There God’s dear people enjoy their happiest hours before they reach their heavenly home. Very sacred, to have the Lord’s presence! Moses felt the importance of this. God made known to Moses His will: He had a great work for that man to do. He wasn’t like some who run in front of God. He knew his own weakness. He felt this, and he prayed earnestly for the Lord’s presence, “If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.” And that prayer of Moses pleased the Lord and He gave him a wonderful answer to it, “And He said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.” And it did. For Moses would have gone under many times but for the Lord’s presence. Some of us poor hobblers tonight feel we should have gone under a thousand times but for the Lord’s presence and for His gracious help.

So David had something very real in our text. Then he says, in the next place, “And take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.” A wonderful blessing to have a Holy Spirit religion! I believe the things of God are commenced by the Holy Spirit and carried on by Him; they are accomplished by Him. David said in another Psalm, “The Lord will perfect (that word means ‘complete’) that which concerneth me.” Sweet confidence! Says the Apostle, “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” The Holy Spirit has a wonderful work to perform. It would be safe for me to say tonight, He is responsible for the safe arrival in glory of everyone for whom Jesus shed His precious blood: He has accepted that responsibility. Jesus tells us, when He (the Spirit of Truth) is come, he will convince of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment to come. Important things! And He alone can take of the things of Jesus and make them known to us. A solemn thing to make a profession and be destitute of the Holy Spirit! The prayer of God’s dear people is,

“Spirit of truth, come down,
Reveal the things of God;
O make to [me] salvation known,
And witness with the blood.”

Just to think! No more prayer; no more hearing; no more blessing upon the sacred Scripture; no hope! That would be our state if God took the Holy Spirit from us. We should be completely destitute of everything that is good; we should be destitute, completely destitute of a desire, a spiritual desire, regarding our eternal destiny.

What a lot there is in some of these little verses in some parts of God’s Word! So, “Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.” Is

that your prayer tonight? Does it suit your case? Have you got a case that needs the Lord's attention, needs the Lord's help, needs the Lord's blessing? Press on poor sinner! And a mercy if you can pray this little prayer, "Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me."

Then he says, "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation." He hadn't lost his salvation. If you have known the Lord Jesus and felt your interest in His precious blood, in His righteousness, you can't lose that salvation. But I tell you what you may lose: that is, the joy of it. For an unguarded word, for an unguarded look, through the pride of your heart, you may grieve the Holy Spirit, and you may go a long, long time in darkness and in bondage. We have lived to prove God doesn't wink at sin; He looks upon it with divine abhorrence. And so, He will chastise us - and in this way perhaps: by withholding from us the joy of His salvation. Well our text speaks of joy, and of that salvation that brings joy to a sinner's heart.

"Joy is a fruit that will not grow
In nature's barren soil";
All we can boast, till Christ we know,
Is vanity and toil."

God's people do taste of joy: it is a strengthening to them: as the Scripture says, it puts strength in them. Poor Job when in the midst of trouble! If only he could find the Lord, if only the Lord would speak to him, "He would put strength in me" - and that is what He does for His dear people.

This joy is the joy of forgiveness; it is the joy of hope; it is the joy of sweetly feeling that Jesus died for me, that He shed His blood upon the cross - for me. It is the joy of that hope that enables a sinner to believe, when he or she has done God's will on earth, He will take them to heaven. That's joy, spiritual joy! Real happiness that is! Some of you may have thought it would have continued with you till the end of your days; but you lose the joy of it. Satan robs you; you rob yourself sometimes of that sacred joy. But I have often thought how wonderfully this is worded: he had not lost his salvation. So it is if one could, then all might, lose their salvation. But not so! But we lose the joy of it.

Perhaps you feel tonight, when you come to your journey's end, that if the Lord comes once more and blesses your soul, as He has blessed it, it will not be death to die. Strictly speaking, death is a very, very solemn thing. But there is nothing terrible in the death of a saint, a dear child of God. Why? Because the dear Lord Jesus gave death its death blow! When He died He took the sting out of death, and enabled the Apostle to say, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." How wonderful to know something of the joy of this salvation! Perhaps you felt you have lost everything; everything is gone, you feel so destitute. You felt you had a little hope and now you seem robbed of even that; that seems to have gone. Well, poor sinner, God won't take that salvation away from you. But He may - to humble you, to make you and me more prayerful - He may withhold for a season the joy of it. How desolate, how dark the poor child of God feels when he hasn't got this joy, when he hasn't got the Lord's felt presence! He wonders if everything is wrong, wonders if anything has ever been right with him, there it is. But the Lord does in His love and mercy grant restoration. I have thought, that is one of the blessings of that covenant

ordered in all things and sure: restoration. If not the enemy would gain the victory over us. But the Lord can, and the Lord does, come and restore the joy of His salvation.

This is a wonderful word, “salvation!” Deliverance, from our sins, from Satan, from all our gloomy fears, and from hell itself - a wonderful word, I may say, a beautiful word, “salvation!” How wonderful to sweetly feel you are saved in the Lord. It isn’t a temporary salvation, otherwise it wouldn’t bring joy, real joy. It is everlasting salvation, so we that have tasted that the Lord is gracious and precious, we have an interest in something that will abide with us when we come to the end of the journey.

So David prays, “Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation.” The Lord did! Though David had foully sinned against the Lord, yet the Lord heard his prayer; the Lord answered his prayer. When he came to his journey’s end he confessed, “Although my house be not so with God; yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure.” That’s where God’s dear people find real joy, find real strength and help, as they journey on.

Lastly, he prays to be upheld: “And uphold me with Thy free Spirit,” Thy Holy Spirit. Never have I felt more to need this upholding. Perhaps some of you feel to need it much; in other words to be kept, for God to keep us. We are only safe as the Lord keeps us,

“Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it;
Prone to leave the God I love;”

Ah! my friends, we dare not depend upon ourselves, but we need omnipotence to uphold us. Peter could well write what he did write to those strangers scattered abroad. He said, “Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” A mercy to be kept isn’t it? To look back over your little life, over your trials, difficulties, losses, crosses, loneliness, and to feel the Lord has kept me. You younger ones, what a mercy to pray for keeping grace, that the Good Shepherd will watch over you, preserve you and keep you, till you come to the end of your journey. The 23rd Psalm is very sweet when we can say, “The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.” There is confidence! Not self-confidence but the sweet, sacred confidence of living faith!

“And uphold me” - watch over me day and night; preserve me; keep me in every hour, in every trial! Don’t let me be rebellious, do not leave me to speak against Thee! No! But uphold me! And God gives His good Spirit, the Holy Spirit, free Spirit, and He works secretly in the hearts of God’s dear people. My dear friends, we know but very, very little here below what the Holy Spirit does for us: how He keeps us; how He may warn us; and how He may testify unto us of the dear Lord Jesus, and the wondrous love of the Father. So we don’t know much, but that little is very precious to God’s dear people.

I must leave these few things with you. The Lord bless this Psalm and help us to pray, “Cast me not away from Thy presence; and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.” You would never pray this, you know, if you hadn’t got the Holy Spirit. If you hadn’t

got a Holy Ghost religion, you wouldn't pray like this, "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation."

I did think, the seeker might say, 'Well it's what I want, that salvation; it's what I want to know, that God has saved me.' Do you poor sinner? Well you wouldn't find these things in the hearts of those who are dead in sin. And those poor things who feel barren, who feel far off, who have to say "I have sinned," like the Prodigal, "against heaven and in Thy sight," these need restoration: and the Lord is able to restore. May He grant it to us, for His name's sake.

Amen.

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