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THE SUMMARY OF THE LIFE-WORK

The Rich Man and Lazarus

*Portion of an Address delivered to the Orphans of the Ashley Down Orphan Houses,
April 3rd, 1874. Luke 16:19-31*

IT has been Mr. Müller's practice for many years to address the orphans under his care on the morning of the day commonly called "Good Friday." On Friday, April 3rd, 1874, the children, to the number of about 1600, assembled in Bethesda Chapel, Great George Street, Bristol. The whole service was conducted by Mr. Müller.

The subject of the address was "The Rich Man and Lazarus" (Luke 16:19-31). In the course of his remarks Mr. Müller said,—

Beloved children, I desire to impress this point particularly upon you for your whole life, that without the blessing of God nothing you do will really prosper. You may toil and strive and labour ever so much, but unless God is your friend all in the end will be in vain. Through the Lord Jesus Christ alone you can be really happy, and therefore no one is to trust in his own power or goodness. Our eyes must be directed to the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom alone are found life, pardon for sin, and acceptance with God. If any of you, beloved boys and girls, desire to get to heaven, you must turn to Jesus; if you wish to escape the place of torment in which the rich man of whom we have read found himself, you must turn to the Lord Jesus Christ. If you wish to be in the place where Lazarus was after his life on earth, you must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and look to Him alone to enable you to reach that place of blessedness. This rich man, who at last went to the place of torment, was not a murderer; there is nothing said to show that he was. He was not a thief; there is not the least reason to think he was. Nor is it said that he was a burglar, or did any great open sin or wickedness. This man was like most people in this world who seek to enjoy themselves, who seek to live to themselves, who seek to please themselves, and care about themselves. This was the sin of this rich man, that he did not set God before him, that he did not live for the honour and glory of God; but that to go his own way, to please himself, to enjoy himself, to gratify himself, was the object of his life. As in Isaiah 53 we read, "We have turned every one to his own way," so this was this man's great sin, he liked to go his own way. Some sinners go astray in some way, and some

in another. Many find their all in eating and drinking, others in pleasuring, others in making money, others in dress, others in pleasant society, but all, in one shape or other, living to themselves. This man's great sin was that he did not set God before him, did not seek to live to God, did not seek to please God, did not seek to glorify God.

Ask yourselves, dear boys and girls, "What is my object in life? What do I live for? Is it to enjoy myself? is it to gratify myself? or do I seek to live for the honour and glory of God?" Now none can live for the honour and glory of God unless they obtain a new nature, a heavenly nature, a spiritual nature, a divine nature. You remember the Lord Jesus said, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." We must be changed,—not merely outwardly changed, but inwardly, altogether changed; and this can alone be through believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. And then, only when we are born again, inwardly changed, having spiritual life within, we desire to live not to ourselves, but to God. You see the vast importance of all this. You see that though this man enjoyed himself whilst here, it was only for a little time. He had to be dragged away from his enjoyments, he could not take these with him; he could not take his servants, he could not take his food, he could not take his costly raiment or his splendid house with him; he must leave all his gold, his cattle, his furniture,—everything, behind him. The rich may live in great comfort and splendour now, and when they die he carried to their graves in a hearse, with plumes on it and on the horses, to make a show; but what then? Ah! if they were not believers in the Lord Jesus Christ before they went out of the world, though they have such a splendid funeral, they, like this rich man of whom we have been reading, lift up their eyes in torments. Now it is just this torment I wish you to escape. I long in my inmost soul that you may escape this place of torment. For this purpose, dear children, the five houses on Ashley Down have been built, that beloved orphans might enter and hear of the Lord Jesus Christ, through whom alone it is possible to escape this place of torment. For this same reason this little meeting has been held to-day, and for this purpose the Word of God is read to you every morning and evening, and teachers and friends from time to time speak to you about the only way to heaven. Lay to heart, dear boys and girls, and ask yourselves this question, "If this were my last day, or suppose on my way to Ashley Down from this chapel I were to fall down dead, should I go to heaven, or to the place of torment?" None of the dear boys and girls can go to the place of happiness unless they are born again; for without faith in the Lord Jesus they are in nature's darkness, they are unforgiven, and not clothed in the righteousness of Christ. But if we believe in the Lord Jesus, then, though we have sinned times without number, though we have been the worst people that ever lived, yet believing in the Lord Jesus our sins at once are forgiven, and we become heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. The moment a poor sinner believes in the Lord Jesus he comes into the road to heaven. How many dear boys and girls here are believers in the Lord Jesus? That is the point. Those who are should see to it that by prayer and reading the Word of God, getting food for

your souls, you live to the honour and praise of God.

Mr. Müller then read the narrative, commenting as he proceeded. Speaking of Lazarus being carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom, he said,—Now I am a great sinner, a very great sinner, and deserve nothing but punishment, and if I had what I deserved I should have hell, but if I were to die I should go to heaven. Though a poor wicked sinner, and though I was particularly wicked when I was the age of some of you, yet if I died now, because I am a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, I should not go to the place of torment, but I should go to heaven. I long to have all the dear orphans with me in heaven. How I long for it! How I pray for it! I pray that I may be surrounded in heaven by thousands of the dear children. But none of you will be in heaven unless while on earth you become believers in the Lord Jesus. Now, then how many will join me in heaven? I want to see in heaven not only the 1600 or 1700 who are here, but those who have already left the Orphan Houses, and all the thousands who may yet come to them; but I shall only see there those who have believed in the Lord Jesus. Lazarus was not taken up to heaven because he was a poor man, or because he was a diseased man, but because he was born again through faith in the Messiah. The Christian orphan may sit now side by side with the unbelieving orphan, may sleep in the same bed, and may eat at the same table; but this will not be the case when this life is over, for at death there will be a complete separation at once and for ever between the believers and unbelievers. I love you, and wish you to escape the place of torment; and therefore in plain language I tell you that there is no such thing as getting into heaven, without preparation, and that must be through believing in the Lord Jesus.

Müller, George. Jehovah Magnified: Addresses. Bristol, England: The Bible and Tract Depot of the Scriptural Knowledge Institution, 1876. Print.

In beginning to sum up the life-work of George Müller, Pierson quotes from the man himself, “*I have joyfully dedicated my whole life to the object of exemplifying how much may be accomplished by prayer and faith.*” He then adds a comment from one of Müller’s oldest friends, Mr. Chapman, “*when a man’s chief business is to serve and please the Lord, all his circumstances become his servants.*”

What does Chapman mean about “*circumstances*” becoming “*servants*”? What illustrations of this principle can you remember from Müller’s life?

How do you typically view the circumstances of your life?

How could you grow in viewing them as “*servants*”?

In examining the 59th Report of the Scriptural Knowledge Institute for Home and Abroad, how does Pierson characterize the leadership of the SKI under Wright compared with that of Müller?

What does this demonstrate about Wright’s view of God, the gospel, and the ministry of the SKI?

How did the Lord provide an associate to help Mr. Wright in the ministry of the SKI?

In this first report of the SKI since Müller's death, the identify of a long-time supporter of the SKI is revealed. Who was the "*servant of the Lord Jesus, who, constrained by the love of Christ, seeks to lay up treasure in heaven*"?

How much did this servant give as recorded through the 59 reports of the SKI? What is that in American dollars?

Pierson states that Müller had "*invested*" much of the large, and small, sums of money that he had received throughout his life. In what way was this money *invested*?

In what ways do you *invest* your money?

Will you seek the Lord's will about *investing* more?

What was Müller's aim in determining how much to *invest*?

As with most of Müller's habits, his habit of benevolence was driven by Scripture. Pierson particularly calls attention to two passages that were formative for Müller, Luke 6:38 and Acts 20:35. What did Müller do with these texts that allowed him to give so sacrificially?

What hinders you from doing the same?

It is easy for us to place Müller on a higher spiritual plane that we cannot attain to, but Müller often pleaded with his hearers not to think that. Pierson calls attention to this when he states that “God calls disciples to various forms of _____, but all alike to the same _____.”

What advice does Pierson give in conjunction with the statement above?

NEXT LESSON:

THE CHURCH LIFE AND GROWTH

Yesterday, Mr. and Mrs. Müller went with me to Dr. Bennet’s garden, and I had a most profitable conversation with him, one to be remembered for many a day with delight. Dr. Bennet came up, and I was amused to hear Müller teaching him the power of prayer, and recommending him to pray about one of the terraces which he wants to buy, but the owner asks a hundred times its value. Dr. B. thought it too trifling a matter to take to the Lord; he said that Mr. Müller might very properly pray about the Orphanage, but as to this terrace, to complete his garden,—he thought he could not make out a good case about it. Mr. M. said it encouraged people in sin if we yielded to covetous demands, so he thought the Dr. might pray that the owners should be kept from exorbitant claims; but Dr. B. said that, as ignorant peasants, they were very excusable for trying either to keep their land, or to get all they could from an Englishman whom they imagined to be a living gold mine! The spirit of both was good; but, of course, the simple, child-like holy trust of Müller was overpowering. He is not a sanctimonious person; but full of real joy, and sweet peace, and innocent pleasure.

Spurgeon, C. H. C. H. Spurgeon’s Autobiography, Compiled from His Diary, Letters, and Records, by His Wife and His Private Secretary, 1856-1878. Vol. 3. Cincinnati; Chicago; St. Louis: Curts & Jennings, 1899. Print.