
22

A GLANCE AT THE GIFTS AND THE GIVERS

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, p 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.

What is most notably absent from this chapter covering the gifts and the givers?

Why do you think that is?

What does Pierson mean when he states that it was never Müller’s principle to “*grasp eagerly at any gift whatever the need or the amount of the gift*”?

What were the reasons and presuppositions that shaped that principle?

Is this a principle that should be applied today? If so, by whom and how?

What five features of the needlewoman’s benevolence does Pierson say are praiseworthy?

What does Pierson mean when he says that, “*God estimates what we give by what we keep*”? Do you agree?

Pierson goes on a bit later to state: “*Reformation takes a retrospective glance and begins in restitution and reparation for all previous wrongs and unfaithfulness.*” What financial principle does he derive from this statement?

Can you think of an example from Scripture where a new believer follows this principle?

Pierson also states some of the blessings he sees connected with the practice of habitual giving. One of those blessings is that, even when begun begrudgingly, it often results in joy and the increase of both the amount and the proportion of that which is given. Have this been your experience?

How did Müller react to gifts given that had been obtained by ungodly means?

Why did he do so?

How did he respond when those who were unable to meet their debts attempted to give? Why?

What do both of these reactions convey about Müller's view of the financial state of the ministry?

What was Müller's attitude toward storing up money for his retirement? Why?

NEXT LESSON: GOD'S WITNESS TO THE WORK

A Testimony

Now in the last place I just want to quote an extract clipped from a religious magazine published in England. In that magazine there has been going on for some time a correspondence, a number of letters, and the subject has been the unemployment in England among the Lord's people. Here is the testimony of one who has written to that paper:

"Twenty-five years ago, being influenced by reading the life of George Muller, I was led to give a tenth of my income to the Lord. I think I was earning \$1.50 a week at the time. The first few years I found it sometimes a sacrifice. One shilling out of ten seemed a lot. But it became such a habit with me to divide at once and put away the Lord's tenth that for years it has been no sacrifice. Now what is the result? This: I have proved the truth that Him that honoureth Me I will honor. All through the war, and since, I have experienced no poverty. Though a shop assistant and now over forty (it is a woman that is writing) I have been away ill only one week in twenty-five years. What makes it even more wonderful is that after twenty I became slightly deaf and this has increased (and they do not want deaf assistants to wait on people in a shop, do they?) and yet, praise the Lord, I am still holding my situation. When I read of so many other sad cases of unemployment I praise the Lord for His mercy to me."

One testimony like that is worth twenty arguments. And, my friends, I want to bear my own witness that after twenty years' experience and observation I have proven the truth of our text that God does open the windows of heaven and that He does give more than enough in response to simple obedience to Him.

“Prove Me now herewith.” That is God’s challenge to you. God dares you to test Him out in the financial realm. You profess to have faith in Him, to trust your soul into His keeping; now He challenges you to see whether you have faith enough to just trust Him with one-tenth of your income for a year, for mind you, in the case of the children of Israel it was a matter of waiting very nearly twelve months for any returns. They were farmers. You test the Lord out for twelve months. You wait a reasonable length of time, and then see whether He lets you be the loser or not. “Prove Me now herewith.” That is God’s challenge to your faith. O brethren and sisters, do so and see if He will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out such a blessing that there shall be “enough and more than enough.”

Pink, Arthur Walkington. The Arthur Pink Anthology. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2005. Print.