

Daily Blessings for God's People

A Sermon

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Delivered by

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"Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. He that is our God is the God of salvation, and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death."—[Psalm 68:19-20](#).

WE observe that this Psalm is a very difficult one. One of the ablest commentators calls it a titanic Psalm. It is truly a giant Psalm, and to master it means much labour. Yet it is by no means difficult to understand when it comes to practical duties, and to those doctrines which are vital. For instance, the two verses before us are very simple and do not need any explanation, but only need to be impressed upon our memory. So is it always throughout Holy Scripture; wherever there are difficult places, they do not touch vital truths. The matter of our salvation is plain enough. The Book of Revelation may be difficult, but not the Gospel according to Matthew. With regard to the future, there may be many clouds, but with regard to that blessed day which is past, which was the crisis of the world's history, when our Saviour hung upon the tree, the darkness is past, and the true light shineth there. Don't, therefore, busy yourselves most about those things which are most difficult, for they are usually of least importance. Concern your heart most with the simplicities of the gospel, for it is there, in the way, the truth, and the life, that the essential matter lies.

Let us come to these two verses, and remark that *they remind us first of the mercies of life*. "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits." They then *assure us of the mercies of death*. "He that is our God is the God of our salvation, and unto God belong the issues from death." And then the two verses tell us of *the common occupation of both life and death*, namely, the blessing of God, whose mercy continues to us in both states. Blessed be Jehovah, whether I receive the daily load of his benefits, or whether he open for me the gates of the grace.

Let us begin then, and contemplate for a few moments:—

I. THE MERCIES OF OUR LIFE.

The text saith, "He daily loadeth us with benefits." Let us keep to the English version just now. Take the words of it. What is it that he gives us— Benefits. We have a very beautiful word in the English language—benevolence. You know that means good wishing, *bene*

volens. He may be a benevolent man who is not able to do any act of kindness, to give any of his substance away for lack of any. But God's goodness to us is not merely *bene volens*, in which he wishes us well, but it is beneficence or good doing. His gifts and benefits are deeds of goodness, acts of goodness. He doth to us that which is good. He doth not only wish us well, and speak to us well, and direct us well, but he doeth well unto us. He doth not only say, "I pity thy last estate," but he delivers the lost out of their ruin. He doth not say, as the churl doth, "Be thou warmed, and be thou filled," and do no more, but, wishing us well, he doth well unto us; he warms our hearts with his love, and fills them with his mercy, and sends us on our way rejoicing. It is true God speaks us well. What more could he say than, to us, he has said in his blessed Word? It is true he wishes us well. "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but had rather that he turn unto me and live." But the essence of his goodness lies in this, that he goes beyond wishes and words into acts.

Begin, brethren, with the greatest of his acts. "He spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all." In that gift he hath already given us all things, and from that blessed pledge he has never gone back, but he has given us all that we want for this life, and for the life to come, for ye have grace and glory, and hath abounded in each. The upper springs fail not, neither do the nether springs. If Christ is our perpetual bread and wine, so, too, our common bread, in answer to our prayer, is given us according to his assurance, "Thy bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure." Will you try to think of the benefits which you have received, dear brother, dear sister? Turn them over now in your mind—the benefits that you have actually yourself received—not only read of, and heard of, and had promises of, but that you have received. Oh! the benefits of early education! the being restrained from, sin. Oh! the benefits of conviction! of being enlightened and made to see the guilt off sin. Oh! the sweet benefit of being led to the Saviour! made to stand at the cross foot, where the blood speaks better things than that of Abel. Oh! the benefit of perfect pardon and of righteousness, which covers us and justifies in the sight of God! What an unspeakable benefit is regeneration! Who shall prize the benefit of adoption? Who is he that shall describe the benefit of daily education in the things of God—of preservation from falling into final, vital sin—of sanctification carried on from day to day? We have benefits that we know of, but we probably have ten times as many that we know not of. Some of them come in at the front door of the house; some of the richest of them seem to steal in at the back door. They are among the most precious bounties that fly in with so soft a wing that we hear them not when they come. Ye shall sooner count the hairs on your head, or the dust upon the sand beach, than you shall be able to estimate the number of his benefits.

Leave that word then, and note the next. It is said in the text concerning God's benefits, that he *loads* us with them—*loads* us with benefits. He does not put a little upon us of his goodness, but much; very much, until it becomes a load. Have you never known what it is

to be bowed right down with such goodness? I have, I freely confess it—I have desired to praise him, but a sense of love so bowed me down that I could only adopt the language of the psalmist and say, "Praise is silent for thee, O God, in Zion." It seemed as if "words were but air, and tongues but clay, and his compassion's so divine," that it was impossible to speak of them. His mercies, as our hymn said just now, come as thick and as fast as the moments do. In fact, it is literally so. Every moment needs heavings of the lungs, pulsings of the blood. The slightest circumstance might prevent one or the other. God's continued benefits come to us even in the simple form of preserved life. We are constantly exposed to peril. "Plagues and death around us fly." God preserves us from perils to the body. Our thoughts—whither might they go? They might in a moment lead us into heresies and foul blasphemies. It is no little thing to be preserved from that spiritual pestilence that walketh both in darkness and the noonday. Glory be to God, who sends us temporal and spiritual benefits so numerous, and each one so weighty, that eye cannot say less than this, "That he daily *loadeth* us with his benefits, until we seem bowed down to the earth under a joyful sense of obligation to his mercy." "He loadeth us with benefits."

Oh! are any of you inclined to murmur? Do you think God deals hard with you? Well, you are what you are by his grace. Though you are not what you wish to be, yet remember you are not what, if strict justice were carried out, you would be. In the poor-house you might be—few admire that residence. In the prison you might be—God preserves you from the sin that would bring you there. In the lunatic asylum you might be—better men and women than you are have come to that. At the grave's mouth you might be—on the sick bed, on the verge of eternity. God's holiest saints have not been spared from the grave. In hell you might be—amongst the lost, wailing, but hopelessly wailing, gnashing your teeth in utter despair. O God, when we think of what we are not, because thy grace has kept us from it, we cannot but say, "Thou hast loaded us with benefits."

But then think of what you are, you Christians. You are God's children; you are joint-heirs with Christ. "All things are yours"; ay, and "things to come," you have guaranteed too—preservation to the end, and you have, after the end of this life, glory without end. The "many mansions" are for you; the palms and harps of the glorified are for you. You have a share in all that Christ has, and is, and shall be. In all the gifts of his ascension you have a part; in the gifts that come to us through his session at the right hand of God, you have your share; and in, the glories of the Second Advent, the grand hope of the Church of God, you shall partake. See how, in the present, and in the past, and in the future, he loadeth you with benefits. There are two great words already.

But the next word is equally large. "Blessed be the Lord, who *daily* loadeth us with benefits." A poor man shall call at your door, and you shall give to him all he wants for food, and cover him, and give him something to make glad his heart withal. If you do it once, you reckon that you have done well. Supposing he should call again to-morrow, you might find

it in your heart to do the same. But suppose he called upon you seven days in the week: I am afraid that by degrees that would become seven times too often, for we count, when we have done men a good turn, that someone else should see to them next time. If we load them especially with benefits, we say, "Don't encroach; don't ride a willing horse too fast. You must not come again so often. You weary me." Ah! this is man; but look at God. He *daily* loadeth us with benefits. How many days has he done that with some of us? Thirty years? "Ah!" saith one, "I can talk of sixty years"—yes, and some of you of seventy and eighty years. Well, he has loaded you with benefits every day. You have never been above the rank of a pauper, so far as your God is concerned. But I will put it differently. You have been a gentleman commoner upon the goodness of God all your life. It has been your lot, like that of Mephibosheth, to sit daily at the King's table and give a portion from him. And yet you murmur. You have been unbelieving, proud, idle; all sorts of ill-temperers have you shown. Yet has he daily loaded you with benefits. It has sometimes seemed to be a wrestling between our sin and God's love, but up to this hour his love has conquered. We have drawn mightily upon his exchequer, but that exchequer has never been exhausted. The load of mercy which was used yesterday won't do for to-day. Like manna, it must come fresh and fresh, and the blessing is that it does come fresh and fresh. When God draws the curtain and stands in the sunlight, mercy streams in on the sunbeam; and when he shuts the eyelids of the day and the evening comes, it is mercy that puts its finger upon our eyelids and bids us rest. He "daily loadeth us with benefits"—every day; and he loads us with benefits not only on bright days, but on dark days. When we are sick, and tossing to and for upon the bed, he still is loading us with benefits, only in another form. He sends sometimes his choicest mercies to us in black-edged envelopes. The very brightest gems of heaven come to us, and we know them not. They sparkle not until faith's eye has seen them. Nature has not perceived their excellence. How he loadeth us with benefits on Sabbath days! There is a dear brother who is almost always here, who, when he sees me on Sunday mornings, generally makes use of some such exclamation as this, "Every day is good to me, but the Sabbath day is seven good days in one. It is blest seven times over." And, indeed, it so is. He loadeth us with benefits on the Sabbath. But then we have our Monday mercies and our Tuesday mercies too; and right on to the close on Saturday night the Lord continues to heap on his mercies one after another, that he may make us feel that we shall sooner weary with thanking him than he will weary in giving us cause for thankfulness.

There is one other word—a very little one, but a sweet one too: "Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth *us* with benefits." "*Us*." Personal matters bring sweetness to our soul, and herein lieth the wonder. That God should load David with benefits was marvellous to David, but not to me. The marvel to me is that he should load *me* with benefits. Beloved brethren and sisters, I do not feel your imperfections, and, therefore, I do not so much perceive the sovereignty of God in dealing graciously with you, but I know some of my own shortcomings,

and they seem to me to be greater than those of others; therefore, do I with gratitude admire the abounding mercy of God that he should load me with benefits.

"Why do I meet to hear his voice,
And enter where there's room;
While thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?"

There may be some whose consciences will allow them to think that their praying made the distinction. I am not able to believe that, but I am compelled to feel that, if I enjoy the things of Christ that others do not, it is of the Lord's mercy, and not of any goodness in me, but entirely of his infinite grace. Let us bless the Lord at this hour because he loadeth us with benefits when he might have passed us by. He might have suffered us to go on heaping up our transgressions until the measure thereof had been filled, and then he might have made us reap for ever that which we had sown. Instead of this, he has made us—many of us—however unlikely persons—to be his chosen ones, and he hath loaded us with benefits.

I have spoken very simply entirely with the view that those hearts that have tasted that the Lord is gracious may now wake up all their powers to praise and bless the name of the Most High. We must not pass away from this, however, without observing that our translation is not literal—indeed, is not the meaning of the passage. Those of you who will look at your Bibles will perceive that the words "*who*" and "*with benefits*", are put in it italics to show that they are not in the Hebrew, but have been supplied by the translators, as they thought them necessary to the sense; and some of the best interpreters say that the passage means this, "Blessed be the Lord, who daily beareth our burdens"; and I have little doubt that that is the correct translation. It is not so much that he loads us, as that he lifts our load for us, and bears it for us. Well, at any rate, that is a sweet rendering, "He daily bears our burden"; and it is a rendering which is a word of rebuke to some of you. Did you not come into this tabernacle tonight with your burdens on your back? Well, it was wrong you should ever have them. "Cast all your care on him, for he careth for you." A man who has a burden-bearer certainly need not bear the burden himself. Faith is never burdened, because she knows where to lay her burden. She hath a burden, but she puts it on the Almighty God. But unbelief, with a far less load than faith carries easily, is bowed down to the dust. Arise, O child of God, whatever thy burden is, and by an act of faith cast it upon God. You have done your little all; leave it now. Your fretfulness will not alter things. You cannot change he night, nor make one hair white or black. Why fret and worry? The world went on very well before you were born; it will when you are dead. Leave the helm. Whenever you have been foremost you made a mistake. He that carves for himself will cut his fingers; but when God has been foremost, and you have been content to follow, you have never had any mistake then; and when God has been your shepherd, you have been constrained to say, "I shall not want."

Oh! then, have done with burden-bearing, and take up the language of the text, "Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears our burdens."

And then the text adds that he is "the God of our salvation." In this life we ought to praise him. His daily mercies are all sweetened with this reflection—that we are saved souls. Our morsel may be dry, but we dip it in this dainty sauce of his salvation. It is true I am poor, but I am saved. It is true I am sick, but I am saved. It is true I am obscure and unknown, but I am saved; and the salvation of God sweetens all. Then is it added to that, it is "*our*" salvation. He that can grasp the salvation which is in Christ and say, "This is mine," is rich to all the intents of bliss, and has his daily life gilded with joy.

And then it is added beyond that, "*our* God." God is ours. He that is our God is the God of salvation. His omnipotence and omniscience, his immutability and his faithfulness—all his attributes are ours. The Father is ours; the Son is ours; the Spirit is ours. The God of election is ours; the God of redemption is ours; the God of sanctification is ours. Oh! with all this, how can we be cast down? Why should we repine! We have certainly abounding cause for blessing and praising the Lord. Those are the mercies of life. And now for a few minutes let us contemplate:—

II. THE MERCIES OF DEATH.

"Unto God belong the issues from death." This may mean several things. We will include its meanings under these heads. Unto God belong escapes from death. Oh! blessed be his name, we may come very near the grave, and the jaws of death may be open to receive us; but the pit cannot shut her mouth upon us until our hour is come.

"Plagues of death around me fly.

Till he please, I cannot die.

Not a single shaft can hit,

Until the God of love see fit.

"What though a thousand at thy side,

At thy right hand ten thousand, died?

Our God, his chosen people saves,

Amongst the dead, amidst the graves."

Whatever occurs around us, we need not be alarmed. We are immortal until our work is done. And amidst infectious or contagious diseases, if we are called to go there, we may sit as easily as though in balmy air. It is not ours to preserve our life by neglecting our duty. It is better to die in service than live in idleness—better to glorify God and depart, than rot above ground in neglecting what he would have us to do. Unto God belong the issues from death. We may, therefore, go without temerity into any danger where duty calls us.

But then unto God belong *the issues that lead actually down to death*. It may be we shall not die. There are some who are comforted much by the belief that Christ will come, and they shall not die. I do not profess to be among the number. I would as soon die as not, and

rather, I think, if I might have my choice, for herein would be a greater conformity to the sufferings of Christ, in actually passing through the grave and rising again, than will fall to the lot of those who do not die. At all events, those who die not shall have no preference beyond them that sleep. So the Apostle tells us. "To" die is "gain"; and we will look upon it as such. But whenever we die, if we die, it will be at God's bidding. No one hath the key of death but the Lord of life. A thousand angels could not hurl us to the grave. All the devils in hell cannot destroy the least lamb in Christ's flock. Till God saith "Return," our spirit shall not leave the body; and we may be well content to depart when God saith the time is come. Oh! how blessed it is to think that the arrows of death are in the quiver of God, and they cannot be shot forth unless as the Lord wills it! Unto the Lord belong the issues from death.

Think of this, then, about your departed friends The Master took them home. Think about your own departure. It is not to be arranged by your folly, not by the malice of the wicked. It will all be planned and designed by the infinite love of God.

But the text may mean something more. Unto God belong the issues from death; that is, *the coming up from death again*. We place the bodies of the saints in the territory of death, but they are only put there, as it were, because there is a lien upon them for a time. They must come out. They must be delivered. for his word says, if we believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, "so also them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." There shall not be a bone or a piece of a bone of one of the saints kept by the enemy as a trophy of his conquest over the Saviour. Christ shall vanquish death entirely, and from the sepulchre he shall snatch all the trophies of the grave. We shall rise again, beloved. What though our bodies rot? What though they feed plants, and in due time feed animals, and pass through innumerable permutations and combinations? Yet he that made us can re-make us; and the voice that bade us live shall bid these bodies live again. "Unto God belong the issues from death." In this we are comforted—to fall asleep, because the angel of the churches shall guard our dust.

And then this further thought. The issues from death grasp *all that comes after death*. The spirit issues from death—never touched by it indeed. Leaving the body behind a while, the spirit enters into a glory, waiting for the fulness. Then when Christ descends, and the trumpet sounds, and the dead in Christ rise in the first resurrection, then shall the re-united manhood enter into the fulness of the glory with a manifested Saviour. These issues from death belong to God, and God secures them to his people. He shall give them to them for whom he has appointed them. He shall give them to those whom he has made worthy by his grace to be partakers of this heritage. They belong to him—not to us by merit, but they are his gifts by covenant and by grace. Oh! then, how sweet it is to think, "The path down to the grave, my God has planted it. It is all his—all his own; and when my turn shall come to go into that garden wherein is the sepulchre, I shall be in my Father's territory." Jesus Christ is Lord of the sick-bed. He makes the bed of his people in their affliction. Even down

to the borders of the grave—to the edge of Jordan's river—it is all Immanuel's land; and he often makes it the land of Beulah. And then, when I dip my foot in that chill stream, it is still my Master's country. I am not out of the presence of the Lord of life now I am coming to the land of death-shade and through the river, but it is the Master's river still, and, on the other side, it is my Lord's own land. When the shining ones shall meet me to conduct me up to the jewelled "city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God," I shall be always at home, always in my Father's country, never an exile, never come upon a tract of territory over which he hath no power. "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for he is with me. His rod and his staff, even there have they sway, and they shall comfort me." Be of good cheer, beloved. "Goodness and mercy shall follow you all the days of your life," and, life being ended, you shall "dwell in the house of your God for ever." In life and in death, you shall prove the tokens of his special love. And now we wind up with this. Here is:—

III. THE COMMON OCCUPATIONS OF BOTH CONDITIONS.

"I will praise thee in life
I will praise thee in death
I will praise thee as long
As thou lendest me breath."

"I will praise thee for ever and ever." The one occupation of a Christian is to praise his God. Now, in order to do this, we must maintain by God's grace a grateful, happy, praiseful frame of mind; and we must endeavour to express that condition of mind by songs of gratitude. This should be our morning's work. Should there not be the morning song? This should be the evening's work. Let it be our vespers to bless and praise God. Israel had the morning lamb and the evening lamb. Let us make both ends of the day bright with his praise, and during the day. We are in a wrong state of mind if we are not in a thankful state of mind. Depend upon it, there is something wrong with you if you cannot praise God. "Oh!" says one, "what, in trouble?" Yes, in every bitter trouble too, for Job could say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, and blessed be the name of the Lord." "But are we never to be sorrowful?" Yes, yet always rejoicing. How can that be? Ah! the Lord teach you it! It is a work of grace. Cast down, but yet, for all that, rejoicing in the Lord! He lifts up the light of his countenance upon us, even when heart and flesh are failing us. I say again, there is something amiss with us when our heart does not praise God. Do as much as you can also. When your heart is glad, try to. praise him with your lip. Do you work alone? Sing. Perhaps, if you work in company, you cannot; but sing with the heart. Men of the world, I am afraid, sing more than we do. I do not admire the most of their songs. They do not seem to have much sense about them—at least the modern ones. But let us sing some of the songs of Zion. You do not want to put your harps on the willows, but if they are there, take them down and praise the Lord, who leadeth you with benefits in life and in death. Therefore, habitually

praise him. And, brethren and sisters, all our actions, as well as our thoughts and words, should tend to, the praise of him who always blesses us. You may stop praising God when he stops having mercy upon you—not till then; and as there is always a new mercy coming to your doors let new praise be going up out of your hearts." But how can I praise God by my actions? saith one. "Do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God and the Father by him." I try to praise God by preaching to-night. Some of you will go to your trades. Well, praise God at your trades. Any work, any lawful calling may be to the Christian priest—and all Christians are priests—the exercise of his sacred functions. You may make your smock-frock, if you will, a vestment; you shall make your meal a sacrament; you shall make everything in the house like the pots that were before the altar; the bells upon the horses shall be "holiness unto the Lord."

And, dear brethren, to close. Let me remark that if we praise God ourselves by word and life, we ought to try to bring others to praise him too. You do not praise God, indeed, unless you want others to do so. It is a mark of sincere thankfulness that it desires others to assist it in the expression of its joy. Blessed be the Lord, this same Psalmist here, who says for himself, "Blessed he the Lord", is the writer of the 67th Psalm. You know how he says there, "Let the people praise thee—yea, let all the people praise thee! Oh! let the nations be glad and sing for joy!" Then he says again, "Let the people praise thee, O God; yea, let all the people praise thee!" Do your utmost to be the means, in God's hands, of bringing others to praise him. Tell them what he has done for you. Tell them of his saving grace. Invite sinners to Christ. Let it be:—

"All your business here below

To say, "Behold the Lamb!"

and in this way you will be setting other tongues a-praising God, so that when your tongue is silent, there shall be others that will take up the strain. Labour for this, beloved, every one of you. Labour for the extension of the choir that shall sing the praises of the Saviour I trust we shall never fall into that narrow-minded spirit which seems to say, "It is enough for me if I am saved, and if those that go to my little place of worship are all right. It is quite enough." No, Master, thy throne is not to be set up in some little conventicle in a back street, and there alone. Thou art not to reign in some little corner of a city, and there alone Thou art not to take this island of Great Britain, and reign in it alone; nor in Europe—in one quarter of the earth alone. Let the whole earth be filled with his praise! And what Christian heart will refuse to say, "Amen and amen"? God grant it may be so! Amen.