Present-Time Blessings

Read with me the first twelve verses of Matthew 5, these verses that we generally call the “Beatitudes.” Some tell us that Matthew 5 is a millennial chapter and that we cannot attain to these blessings at the present time. I believe that every one who receives the Baptism in the Spirit has a real foretaste and earnest of millennial blessing, but that here the Lord Jesus is setting forth present-day blessings that we can enjoy here and now.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” This is one of the richest places into which Jesus brings us. The poor have a right to everything in heaven. “Theirs is.” Dare you believe it? Yes, I dare. I believe, I know, that I was very poor. When God's Spirit comes in as the ruling, controlling power of the life, He gives us God's revelation of our inward poverty, and shows us that God has come with one purpose, to bring heaven's best to earth, and that with Jesus He will indeed “freely give us all things.”

An old man and an old woman had lived together for seventy years. Someone said to them, “You must have seen many clouds during those days.” They replied, “Where do the showers come from? You never get showers without clouds.” It is only the Holy Ghost who can bring us to the place of realization of our poverty; but, every time He does it, He opens the windows of heaven and the showers of blessing fall.

But I must recognize the difference between my own spirit and the Holy Spirit. My own spirit can do certain things on natural lines, can even weep and pray and worship, but it is all on a human plane, and we must not depend on our own human thoughts and activities or on our own personality. If the Baptism means anything to you, it should bring you to the death of the ordinary, where you are no longer putting faith in your own understanding; but, conscious of your own poverty, you are ever yielded to the Spirit. Then it is that your body becomes filled with heaven on earth.”

“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.” People get a wrong idea of mourning. Over in Switzerland they have a day set apart to take wreaths to graves. I laughed at the people's ignorance and said, “Why are you spending time around the graves? The people you love are not there. All that taking of flowers to the graves is not faith at all.” Those who died in Christ are gone to be with Him, “which,” Paul said, “is far better.”

My wife once said to me, “You watch me when I'm preaching. I get so near to heaven when I'm preaching that some day I'll be off.” One night she was preaching and when she had finished, off she went. I was going to Glasgow and had said goodbye to her before she went to meeting. As I was leaving the house, the doctor and policeman met me at the door and told me that

she had fallen dead at the Mission door. I knew she had got what she wanted. I could not weep, but I was in tongues, praising the Lord. On natural lines she was everything to me; but I could not mourn on natural lines, but just laughed in the Spirit. The house was soon filled with people. The doctor said, “She is dead, and we can do no more for her.” I went up to her lifeless corpse and commanded death to give her up, and she came back to me for a moment. Then God said to me, “She is Mine; her work is done.” I knew what He meant.

They laid her in the coffin, and I brought my sons and my daughter into the room and said, “Is she there?” They said, “No, father.” I said, “We will cover her up.” If you go mourning the loss of loved ones who have gone to be with Christ, I say it in love to you, you have never had the revelation of what Paul spoke of when he showed us that it is better to go than to stay. We read this in Scripture, but the trouble is that people will not believe it. When you believe God, you will say, “Whatever it is, it is all right. If Thou dost want to take the one I love, it is all right, Lord.” Faith removes all tears of self-pity.

But there is a mourning in the Spirit. God will bring you to a place where things must be changed, and there is a mourning, an unutterable groaning until God comes. And the end of all real faith always is rejoicing. Jesus mourned over Jerusalem. He saw the conditions, He saw the unbelief, He saw the end of those who closed their ears to the Gospel. But God gave a promise that He should see the travail of His soul and be satisfied, and that He should see His seed. What happened on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem was an earnest of what will be the results of His travail, to be multiplied a billionfold all down the ages in all the world. And as we enter in the Spirit into travail over conditions that are wrong, such mourning will ever bring results for God, and our joy will be complete in the satisfaction that is brought to Christ thereby.

“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.” Moses was headstrong in his zeal for his own people, and it resulted in his killing a man. His heart was right in his desire to correct things, but he was working on natural lines, and when we work on natural lines we always fail. Moses had a mighty passion, and that is one of the best things in the world when God has control and it becomes a passion for souls to be born again; but apart from God it is one of the worst things. Paul had it to a tremendous extent, and, breathing out threatenings, he was hailing men and women to prison. But God changed it, and later we find him wishing himself accursed from Christ for the sake of his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh. God took the headstrong Moses and moulded him into the meekest of men. He took the fiery Saul of Tarsus and made him the foremost exponent of grace. Oh, brothers, God can transform you in like manner, and plant in you a divine meekness and every other thing that you lack.

In our Sunday school we had a boy with red hair. His head was as red as fire and so was his temper. He was such a trial. He kicked his teachers and the superintendent. He was simply uncontrollable. The teachers had a meeting in which they discussed the matter of expelling him. They thought that God might undertake for that boy and so they decided to give him another chance. One day he had to be turned out, and he broke all the windows of the mission. He was worse outside than in. Some time later we had a ten-days revival meeting. There was nothing much doing in that meeting and people thought it a waste of time, but there was one result--the redheaded lad got saved. After he was saved, the difficulty was to get rid of him at our house. He would be there until midnight crying to God to make him pliable and use him for His glory. God delivered the lad from his temper and made him one of the meekest, most beautiful boys you ever saw. For twenty years he has been a mighty missionary in China. God takes us just as we are and transforms us by His power.

I can remember the time when I used to go white with rage, and shake all over with temper. I could hardly hold myself together. I waited on God for ten days. In those ten days I was being emptied out and the life of the Lord Jesus was being wrought into me. My wife testified of the transformation that took place in my life, “I never saw such a change. I have never been able to cook anything since that time that has not pleased him. Nothing is too hot or too cold, everything is just right.” God must come and reign supreme in your life. Will you let Him do it? He can do it, and He will if you will let Him. It is no use trying to tame the “old man.” But God can deal with him. The carnal mind will never be subjected to God, but God will bring it to the cross where it belongs, and will put in its place, the pure, the holy, the meek mind of the Master.

“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.” Note that word, “shall be filled.” If you ever see a “shall” in the Bible make it yours. Meet the conditions and God will fulfil His word to you. The Spirit of God is crying, “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money: come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” The Spirit of God will take of the things of Christ and show them to you in order that you may have a longing for Christ in His fullness, and when there is that longing, God will not fail to fill you.

See that crowd of worshipers who have come up to the feast. They are going away utterly unsatisfied, but on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stands up and cries. “If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” Jesus knew that they were going away without the living water, and so He directs them to the true source of supply. Are you thirsty today? The living Christ still invites you to Himself,

and I want to testify that He still satisfies the thirsty soul and still fills the hungry with good things.

In Switzerland, I learned of a man who met with the assembly of the Plymouth Brethren. He attended their various meetings, and one morning, at their breaking of bread service, he arose and said, “Brethren, we have the Word, and I feel that we are living very much in the letter of it, but there is a hunger and thirst in my soul for something deeper, something more real than we have, and I cannot rest until I enter into it.” The next Sunday this brother rose again and said, “We are all so poor here, there is no life in this assembly, and my heart is hungry for reality.” He did this for several weeks until it got on the nerves of those people and they protested. “Sands, you are making us all miserable. You are spoiling our meetings, and there is only one thing for you to do, and that is to clear out.”

That man went out of the meeting in a very sad condition. As he stood outside, one of his children asked him what was the matter, and he said, “To think that they should turn me out from their midst for being hungry and thirsty for more of God!” I did not know anything of this until afterward.

Some days later someone rushed up to Sands and said, “There is a man over here from England, and he is speaking about tongues and healing.” Sands said, “I'll fix him. I'll go to the meeting and sit right up in the front and challenge him with the Scriptures. I'll dare him to preach these things in Switzerland. I'll publicly denounce him.” So he came to the meetings. There he sat. He was so hungry and thirsty that he drank in every word that was said. His opposition soon petered out. The first morning he said to a friend, “This is what I want.” He drank and drank of the Spirit. After three weeks he said, “God will have to do something now or I'll burst.” He breathed in God and the Lord filled him to such an extent that he spoke in other tongues as the Spirit gave utterance. Sands is now preaching, and is in charge of a new Pentecostal assembly.

God is making people hungry and thirsty after His best. And everywhere He is filling the hungry and giving them that which the disciples received at the very beginning. Are you hungry? If you are, God promises that you shall be filled.