

1

The Two Men: Godly and Ungodly

“There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table; moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass that the beggar died and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom; the rich man also died, and was buried. And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.’ But Abraham said, ‘Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed; so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us that would come from thence.’ Then he said, ‘I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father’s house, for I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.’ Abraham saith unto him, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.’ And he said, ‘Nay, father Abraham, but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.’ And he said unto him, ‘If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.’ ” Luke 16:19-31

This Scripture was not spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ to show you the state of two single persons only, as some, through ignorance of the drift of Christ in His parables, dream; but to show you the state of the godly and ungodly to the end of the world. This is clear to him who is of an understanding heart. For He spoke these words to the end that later generations should take notice thereof, and fear, lest they also fall into the same condition. In my discourse upon these words I shall not be tedious; but as briefly as I may, I shall pass through the several verses and lay down some of the various truths contained therein. May the Lord grant that they be profitable, and of great advantage to those who read them or hear them read.

I shall not spend much time upon verses 19-20, but shall only give you three or four short hints, and so pass to the next verses, for they are the words I intend most especially to insist upon. Verses 19-20 run thus: "There was a certain rich man which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared deliciously [or sumptuously] every day. And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate full of sores."

If these verses and no more had been spoken by Jesus Christ, nearly all the world would have cast a wrong interpretation on them. If Jesus had said only this much, "There was a certain rich man which fared sumptuously daily, and a certain beggar laid at his gate full of sores," the world would have made this conclusion of them: "The rich man was the happy man." For at first view it represents such a thing; but take all together, that is, read

the whole parable, and you shall find that there is no man in a worse condition than he, as I shall clearly hold forth afterward.

Again, if a man would judge men according to outward appearances, he shall oftentimes take his mark amiss. Here is a man who, to outward appearances, appears as the only blessed man, better by half than the beggar, inasmuch as he is rich and the beggar poor; he is well clothed, but the beggar is nearly naked; he has good food, but the beggar would be glad for dogs' meat. "And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table." The rich man fares well every day, but the beggar is glad for a bit when he can get it. Oh, who would not be in the rich man's state? A wealthy man, with all sorts of new suits and dainty dishes every day, has enough to make one who minds nothing but his belly, his back, and his lusts to say, "Oh, that I were in that man's condition! Oh, that I had as much as that man has! Then I should live a life indeed; then I should have heart's ease aplenty; then I should live pleasantly, and might say to my soul, 'Soul, be of good cheer; eat, drink, and be merry. You have everything aplenty, and are in a most blessed condition.' "

This is the conclusion with them who judge according to outward appearances. But if the whole parable is well considered, you will see that that which is held in high estimation with men is an abomination in the sight of God. And John 16:20-22 shows that the saddest condition, according to outward appearances, is oftentimes the most excellent one; for the beggar had ten thousand times the best of it, though, to outward ap-

pearances, his state was the saddest. From this we observe that those who judge according to outward appearances, for the most part, judge amiss (John 7:24). They who look upon their outward enjoyments as tokens of God's special grace to them are also deceived (Revelation 3:17). For here in the parable, a man of wealth and a child of the devil may be the same person; a man may have an abundance of outward enjoyments and yet be carried by the devils into eternal burnings (Luke 12:20). But this is the trap in which the devil has caught many thousands of poor souls, namely by getting them to judge according to outward appearances, or according to God's outward blessings.

Ask a poor, carnal, covetous wretch how we should know a man to be in a happy state, and he will answer, "Those whom God blesses and gives an abundance of this world to." Yet, for the most part, they are the cursed men. Alas! Poor men, they are so ignorant as to think that because a man is increased in outward things, and that by a small stock, therefore God loves that man with a special love, or else He would never do so much for him, never bless him so, and prosper the work of his hands. Ah! Poor soul, it is the rich man who goes to hell. "The rich man died, and in hell [mark it, "in hell"] he lifted up his eyes."

To see how the great ones of the world go strutting up and down the streets sometimes, makes me wonder. Surely they look upon themselves to be the only happy men; but it is because they judge according to outward appearances. They look upon themselves to be the only blessed men, when the Lord knows the generality are left

out of that blessed condition. "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called" (1 Corinthians 1:26). Ah! If they who now so brag that nobody dares scarcely look on them did but believe this, it would make them hang down their heads and cry, "Oh, give me Lazarus' portion!"

I might here enlarge very much, but I shall not. I shall only say to you who have much of this world, take care that you do not have your portion in this world. Take heed that it is not said to you hereafter, when you would very willingly have heaven, "Remember that in your lifetime you had your good things; in your lifetime you had your portion" (see Psalm 17:14).

And friend, who seeks after this world and desires riches, let me ask this question: Would you be content that God should put you off with a portion of this life? Would you be glad to be kept out of heaven with a well-clothed back and a belly filled with the dainties of this world? Would you be glad to have all your good things in your lifetime, to have your heaven last no longer than while you live in this world? Would you be willing to be deprived of eternal happiness and felicity? If you say no, then have a care of the world and your sins; have a care of desiring to be a rich man lest your table be made a snare to you (Psalm 69:22); lest the wealth of this world bars you out of glory. For, as the apostle says, "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition" (1 Timothy 6:9).

These two men here spoken of hold forth to us the state of the godly and ungodly. The beggar holds forth

the godly and the rich man the ungodly. "There was a certain rich man."

But why are the ungodly held forth under the notion of a rich man?

First, because Christ would not have them look too high, as I said before, but that those who have riches should have a care that their riches are not all their portion (James 1:10-12; 1 Timothy 6:17).

Second, because rich men are most liable to the devil's temptations; they are most ready to be puffed up with pride, stoutness, and the cares of this world, in which things they spend most of their time in lusts, drunkenness, wantonness, idleness, together with the other works of the flesh—for which things the wrath of God comes upon the children of disobedience (Colossians 3:6).

Third, because He would comfort the hearts of His own, who are most commonly of the poorer sort. God has chosen the poor, despised, and base things of this world (1 Corinthians 1:26). Should God have set the rich man in the blessed state, His children would have concluded that they, being poor, had no share in the life to come.

Again, had not God given such a discovery of the sad condition of those who are for the most part rich men, we would have concluded that the rich are absolutely the blessed men. Nay, albeit the Lord Himself so evidently declares that the rich ones of the world are, for the most part, in the saddest condition, yet they, through unbelief or presumption, harden themselves and seek for the glory of this world as though the Lord Jesus Christ did

not mean what He said, or else that He will say more than shall assuredly come to pass. But let such know that the Lord has a time to fulfill what He had time to declare, for the Scripture cannot be broken (John 10:35).

The Lord does not mean that those who are ungodly are rich in the world, and none other, for then all those who are poor, yet graceless and vain men, must be saved and delivered from eternal vengeance, which would be contrary to the Word of God, which says that together with the kings of the earth, the great men, the chief captains, and the mighty men, there are bondmen or servants, and slaves, who cry out at the appearance of the Almighty God, and His Son Jesus Christ, to judgment (Revelation 6:15).

So that, though Christ says, "There was a certain rich man," yet you must understand that He means all the ungodly, rich or poor. Nay, if you will not understand it so now, you shall understand it to be so meant at the day of Christ's second coming, when all who are ungodly shall stand at the left hand of Christ with pale faces and guilty consciences, with the vials of the Almighty's wrath ready to be poured out upon them. Thus much regarding verse 19.

Verse 20: "And there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores." This verse chiefly holds forth these things:

- The saints of God are a poor, contemptible people: "There was a certain beggar." If you understand the word "beggar" to hold forth outward poverty, or scarcity in outward things, such are the saints of the Lord; for they are, for the most part, a poor, despised, con-

temptible people. But if you allegorize it and interpret it thus, they are such as beg earnestly for heavenly food, this is also the spirit of the children of God. And it may be, and is a truth in this sense, though not as naturally gathered from this Scripture.

- That “he was laid at his gate, full of sores.” These words hold forth the distempers of believers. Saying that he was full of sores may signify the many troubles, temptations, persecutions, and afflictions in body and spirit which they meet withal while they are in the world, but also the entertainment they find at the hands of those ungodly ones who live upon the earth. Whereas it is said that he was “laid at his gate, full of sores.” Mark it: he was laid at his gate, not in his house; that was thought too good for him. But he was “laid at his gate, full of sores.”

From here observe that the ungodly world does not desire to entertain and receive the poor saints of God into their houses. If they must be somewhere near them, yet they shall not come into their houses, but will be shut out of doors. If they need to be near us, let them be at the gate.

Observe that the world is not at all touched with the afflictions of God’s children, for they are all full of sores. They are a despised, afflicted, tempted, and persecuted people whom the world does not pity, no, but rather will labor to aggravate their trouble by shutting them out of doors. If they sink or swim, what does the world care? The world is resolved to disown them; they will give them no entertainment. If lying down in the streets will do them any good, if hard usage will do them any good,

if to be disowned, rejected, and shut out of doors by the world will do them any good, they shall have enough of that—but otherwise no refreshment, no comfort from the world. And he “was laid at his gate, full of sores.”

Verse 21: “And he desired to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table; the dogs came also and licked his sores.” By these words our Lord Jesus shows us the frame of a Christian’s heart, and also the heart and carriage of worldly men towards the saints of the Lord. The Christian’s heart is held forth by this, that anything will content him while he is on this side of glory: “he desired to be fed with the crumbs,” the dogs’ meat, anything. A Christian will be content with anything if he can keep life and soul together. He is content; he is satisfied; he has learned—if he has learned to be a Christian—to be content with anything. As Paul says, “I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content” (Philippians 4:11).

He learns in all conditions to study to love God, to walk with God, to give up himself to God; and if the crumbs that fall from the rich man’s table will satisfy nature and give him bodily strength, so that thereby he may be the more able to walk in the way of God, he is content. And he “desired to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man’s table.” But mark it: he did not have them. You do not find that he had so much as a crumb or a scrap allowed unto him. No, those must be preserved for the dogs. From whence observe that the ungodly world loves their dogs better than the children of God.

You will say, “That is strange.” It is so indeed, yet it is

true, as will be clearly manifested. For instance, how many pounds do some men spend in a year on their dogs, when in the meanwhile the poor saints of God may starve for hunger? They will build houses for their dogs, when the saints must be glad to wander and lodge in dens and caves of the earth (Hebrews 11:38). And if saints are in any of their houses for the hire thereof, they will eject them or pull the house down over their heads rather than not rid themselves of such tenants.

Some men cannot go half a mile from home but they must have dogs at their heels; but they can very willingly go half a score miles without the society of a Christian. Nay, if when they are busy with their dogs they should chance to meet a Christian, they would willingly shift him if they could. They will go on the other side of the hedge or the way rather than have any society with him; and if at any time a child of God should come into a house where there are but two or three ungodly wretches, they commonly wish either themselves or the saint out of doors. And why is it so? Because they cannot find any pleasure in the society of a Christian; though if there should come in at the same time a dog, or a drunken, swearing wretch (which is worse than a dog), they will make him welcome. He shall sit down with them and partake of their dainties.

And now tell me, you who love your sins and your pleasures, would you not rather keep company with a drunkard, a swearer, a strumpet, a thief, nay, a dog than an honest-hearted Christian? If you say no, what does your sour carriage to the people of God mean? Why do you look on them as if you would eat them up? Yet at the

very same time, if you can but meet your dog or a drunken companion, you fawn upon them, take acquaintance with them, and go to the tavern or alehouse with them two or three times a week. But if the saints of God meet together, pray together, and labor to edify one another, you will stay till doomsday before you will look into the house where they are. Ah, friends, when all comes to all, you will be found to love drunkards, strumpets, dogs, anything, nay, to serve the devil rather than to have loving and friendly society with the saints of God.

Moreover, "the dogs came and licked his sores." Here again you may see not only the afflicted state of the saints of God in this world, but also that even dogs themselves, according to their kind, are more favorable to the saints than the sinful world. Though the ungodly will have no mercy on the saints, yet it is ordered so that these creatures will. Though the rich man would not entertain him into his house, yet his dogs came and did the best good they could, even to lick his running sores. It was thus with Daniel when the world was mad against him, and would have him thrown to the lions to be devoured. The lions shut their mouths at him, or rather the Lord shut them up, so that the hurt did not befall him that was desired by his adversaries (Daniel 6). And I am persuaded that if the creatures would do as some men would have them do, the saints of God could not walk so quietly up and down the streets and other places as they do. As I said before, I am persuaded that, at the day of judgment, many men's conditions and carriages will be so laid open that it will be evident that they have been

very merciless toward the children of God, insomuch that when the providence of God fell out so as to cross their expectations, they have been very much offended thereat, as is very evidently seen in them who set themselves to study how to bring the saints into bondage, and to thrust them into corners, as in these late years (Psalm 31:13). And because God has, in His goodness, ordered things otherwise, they have gnashed their teeth thereat. Hence, then, let the saints learn not to commit themselves to their enemies. "Beware of men" (Matthew 10:17). They are very merciless men, and will not so much favor you, if they can help it, as you may suppose they may. Nay, unless the overruling hand of God in goodness orders things contrary to their natural inclination, they will not even show you as much favor as a dog.

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