

Spiritual Blessings in Christ

by John Kershaw

The sermon emphasizes the spiritual blessings that are available to believers through the Lord Jesus Christ, including salvation, justification, and redemption.

Scripture: Romans 3:23

Topics: "Spiritual Blessings", "Justification By Faith"

Description

John Kershaw preaches about the spiritual blessings that believers receive in Christ, emphasizing the need for faith, repentance, and a justifying righteousness found only in Jesus. He illustrates the concept of spiritual destitution and seeking refuge in Christ through the story of Joseph, highlighting Christ's compassion and provision for the helpless. Kershaw delves into the blessings of salvation, justification, redemption, and the atoning blood of Christ, emphasizing the necessity of feeling the plague of sin in one's heart and finding cleansing and peace in the precious blood of Jesus.

Transcript

Preached by John Kershaw at Zoar Chapel London, on April 18th, 1848.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3).

Beloved, many of you will recollect that we had these words under consideration last Thursday evening. We endeavored to prove, in the first place, from the Word of God and Christian experience, that we shall never find anything in ourselves but sin and weakness, unworthiness and unprofitableness; and secondly, that as all the fullness of grace and salvation is treasured up in the Lord Jesus Christ, there must be corresponding weakness, emptiness and unprofitableness felt in us. But when it pleases the Lord, in the riches of his grace, to bless the soul with an enjoyment of himself and his precious truth, and with the comforts and consolations of his salvation, the result is, as in our text, that poor soul in return will bless, praise and magnify the God of his salvation.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." God has blessed his people from the beginning with every needful new covenant blessing, treasured up in Christ Jesus their covenant Head. There is not a single blessing of grace and salvation which is not secured and deposited in him. Ah, my friends, it is well for us they are treasured up in Christ Jesus, because in him they are safe and secure. The Holy Spirit, in his appointed

time, convinces the heart of the poor sinner of the need of these spiritual blessings; he gives him deeply to feel his need, and puts a cry in his heart after them. The Lord says, "I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." The poor sinner will never come to Christ, bow down before him and seek the Lord's blessing, until he is brought into poverty, destitution and indigent circumstances. He will never flee to Christ for refuge until every other resource fails him, and he is at his wits' end and knows not what to do. But, blessed be his name, Christ is a refuge for the helpless and the destitute.

We have these things blessedly set forth and traced out in the history of Joseph. He was a type of Christ. "Let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him who was separated from his brethren." The spiritual Joseph is to be seen in it. When was it, my friends, that Joseph's brethren went to him, and made application for food? Not until they were in famine, when need and starvation stared them in the face. But why did they go to Joseph? Because all the supplies in Egypt were treasured up by him, and there was no getting them but through an application to Joseph. And when the sons of Jacob came to Joseph, they entered into his presence just like the poor sinner does into the presence of Jesus - they fell down before him. But Joseph knew his brethren; he remembered his dreams, and thought of the time when in the simplicity of his heart he told them how he dreamt they were all binding sheaves in the field, and how his sheaf arose and stood uppermost, while all the sheaves of his brethren fell down before him; and in consequence of revealing this dream to them, how they had envied him and conspired together to take away his life. But now he sees the fulfillment of it. In the time of their destitution and famine they come to him and fall down at his feet, entreating him to supply them with provision.

And just so it is with the convinced sinner. He comes in his poor and needy circumstances and falls down before the Lord Jesus Christ, our spiritual Joseph. Now Joseph knew his brethren and felt for them; they were near his heart; and though he appeared to speak roughly at first, yet he could not long refrain from acknowledging them. He quickly turns aside to weep, for his affections of compassion were moved towards them.

But, however strong the feeling of love and affection might have been that Joseph had towards his brethren, it was not one ten thousandth part so strong as Christ, our spiritual Joseph, has towards his people. Bless his precious name, he has made provision for them and treasured it up in himself. He brings the poor soul to his blessed feet, to fall down and supplicate for mercy. It is the hungry that are filled with good things, while the rich are sent empty away. And when the sinner is brought to feel his spiritual destitution, wretchedness, guilt and misery; when he finds that the world cannot afford him any help, and that he cannot help himself; when all creature refuge fails him; when all the streams of earthly comfort dry up, and they are proved to be broken cisterns that can hold no water, then it is that he comes and falls prostrate before the Lord at his blessed feet. The Lord draws him to himself, and says, "All that the Father gives me shall come to me; and him that comes" - in a destitute, lost, ruined and undone condition - "I will never cast out."

But I must pause a moment or two to notice the characters here expressed. There are some it appears who will be "cast out." Who are those that will be "cast out"? Those who come with a price in their hand; those who are rich and high-minded; those who fancy they have some worth or worthiness, and use it as a plea with the Lord why they should have the blessing - all these he will cast out and send empty away. But those who come to him guilty, weak, helpless, ignorant, naked and filthy, without money and without price (bless his name forever!) he will never cast them out. He knows your destitution, poverty and every spiritual blessing you stand in need of; and the supply is all treasured up in himself, that you may receive grace for grace. It is for such as you I desire tonight so to speak that the Word may be made a blessing to

your never-dying souls.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

I. We have already spoken of the spiritual blessing of a finished and complete salvation by the Lord Jesus Christ, and that the enjoyment of it is inseparably connected with faith and repentance. Salvation is wholly and entirely of the Lord. His people are saved in him with an everlasting salvation. Faith and repentance are spiritual blessings communicated by the Lord to the heirs of promise, his elect people, and are wrought by the Holy Spirit in their hearts as fruits and effects of the salvation of the dear Redeemer.

II. But to proceed a little further into this blessed subject, we observe, in the second place, in the Lord Jesus Christ we have the spiritual blessing of a justifying righteousness. We can never stand justified before a holy God in his righteous law on the ground of works, or of any worth or worthiness done by us. I do not know of a greater impossibility or absurdity than to suppose that justification before God can be obtained by anything the sinner can do, or by anything he may have done, or ever expects to do, either in whole or in part. The law demands purity and perfection, and the poor sinner is all impurity and imperfection; all therefore that the law can do is to curse and condemn the transgressor.

But let us hear what Paul says upon this subject: "Now we know that what things soever the law says, it says to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." God will stop the mouth of every elect vessel of mercy in this world. But those who are left in sin, and have not their mouth stopped here, will have it stopped at the judgment of the great day. God's elect are brought in guilty and condemned in their souls before God in a righteous law. They are made to feel what Paul says in the next verse: "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." My friends, do we feel this? Has the Lord taught us this truth in our own souls? If so, we want the blessing of a free grace justification, which is only to be had in the Lord Jesus Christ. We shall find it nowhere else, I am sure. Hence the apostle says, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

Now friends, look where the blessing is: "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Our justification by grace and acceptance with God is only to be found where it is treasured up - in Christ. You cannot find it in yourselves. It has pleased the Father that in the Lord Jesus Christ all fullness should dwell for every poor, sensible soul who is brought by God the Spirit to confess his guilt and misery, feel his need, and have earnest desires, hungerings and thirstings after Christ's justifying righteousness. The Lord brings his people to know that in his solemn presence they are altogether as an unclean thing, and that all their doings and righteousness are as filthy rags. They find that when they would do good evil is present with them; that the good they would they do not, while the evil they would not that they do.

So that the poor soul who is brought more and more to feel his own evils, and to see that he has nothing in self to glory in, but that he is as an unclean thing before the Lord, will be led by the Holy Spirit to discover that his justification and acceptance is treasured up in a precious Christ; and he will burst out in the language of the church of old, "Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength"; and again, "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory." Our justification, our acceptance and our glory before a holy God is in the Lord Jesus Christ. Boasting is excluded on every side. Hence the apostle says, "To declare at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him who

believes in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? No, but by the law of faith."

This is the way, my friends, whereby we are considered just and accepted in Jesus Christ. "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses." The righteousness of Christ is imputed to the poor sinner. "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputes not iniquity." The poor sinner's unrighteousness is washed away in the atoning blood of the Lamb; he is constituted righteous in the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my friends, as we stand on the Rock of Ages, sin is done away; we are clad in the Redeemer's righteousness, and stand complete and accepted in the sight of Jehovah. But it is in Christ, my friends. And blessed be God that it is there.

But the children of God need not merely to know the doctrine of justification and acceptance in Christ; they need to have a blessed revelation of their interest in it powerfully made known to their heart and conscience by the Holy Spirit. Now the enjoyment of this is by faith; hence the apostle says, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." "The just shall live by faith." But faith is the gift of God. May the Lord enable you, poor soul, to look from yourself to a precious Christ, to see that his perfect obedience is yours. May the Lord enable you to look to the atonement of Christ on the cross, whereby your sins are done away. May the Lord enable you, poor sinner, to look to Jesus, and see the curse removed, sin atoned for, righteousness brought in, heaven opened, death abolished, and life and immortality brought to light. Wherever the blessed Spirit has begun the work of grace in the heart of a poor sinner, he will land that precious soul in immortal bliss and blessedness at last. O may he therefore now enable you, poor soul, to look to and see the ability of Christ, to join in the language of the poet, and sing-

"A feeble saint shall win the day,

Though death and hell obstruct the way."

But it is in Christ, my friends; it is in Christ. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

III. But again; we observe, thirdly, there is the spiritual blessing of redemption - redemption from sin, iniquity and the curse of the law. But it is only to be found in Christ. Jesus Christ, the incarnate God, is the great Redeemer of his church and people. "Our Redeemer," says the prophet, "is strong"; he is strong to redeem, strong to deliver, and mighty to save. O that I could speak of him as I have him in my heart, bless his precious name! All might, power and ability is in Christ, and all to redeem us from sin, the curse of the law and the pit of destruction. But what is the ransom? What is the price, my friends? Silver and gold and corruptible things? O no! If a man had all the silver and gold in the earth, and the cattle upon a thousand hills, and could give them all for the sin of his soul, it would be scorned; yes, ten thousand rivers of oil would be a sacrifice insufficient.

But we have redemption in Christ. He is not only the great Redeemer; but marvelous to tell, he is also the ransom price. "Walk in love, as Christ also has loved us, and has given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor." Mark the reading: he gives himself, his life, his blood, as an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor. When on the cross he suffered "the Just for the unjust"; when he bled, groaned and died for our sins, it was to redeem us from all iniquity, and to deliver us from the curse of the divine law by being made a curse for us. When he shed his precious blood for the

remission of our sins, it was our ransom price. Bless his precious and immortal name, by sacrificing and offering himself up once for all, he has "obtained eternal redemption for us." Though it is lofty language, yet it is firm and sure - "eternal redemption"! "We have redemption." Where? "Through his blood," through his atoning sacrifice, "even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." He has redeemed his church and people, even millions of men by his blood; so that, my friends, he is of God "made unto us redemption."

Now this just suits the captive soul held in bondage and chains; he stands in need of just such a redemption price. When God arrests the poor soul by convincing him of sin, he is held fast in the chains and fetters of legal bondage, he is a captive soul in prison, shut up unto the faith of the gospel. I would not give a groat for a man's religion if he has never been in the prison and the low dungeon. Christ can never be precious to him as his salvation, nor his sacrifice prized, unless he has been there. "Bring my soul out of prison," says David, "that I may praise your name." "Let the sighing of the prisoner come up before you; according to the greatness of your power preserve you those that are appointed to die."

Now, when the poor soul is in prison, in chains and in condemnation, he needs deliverance from his captivity, but he feels that none upon earth can help or deliver him. O no; the blessed Savior alone can deliver and save him. His atoning blood is the ransom price. He says, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." When this deliverance is proclaimed in the conscience of the poor sinner, the effect is as the Bible describes - it is "liberty to the captives." Our religion to stand the test must be according to the Scriptures; and the language of the inspired Word is, "Deliver him" (the poor, captive, bowed-down soul) "from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom for him" - the blood of the incarnate God. "As for you," says Jehovah the Father to the dear Redeemer, "by the blood of your covenant, I have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit wherein there is no water." Mark it, my friends, God delivers the poor sinner by the blood of the covenant, the blood of the dear Redeemer. The Holy Spirit applies the atoning blood of Immanuel to the conscience of the convinced sinner, and he discovers to him that the debt of sin is paid, law and justice satisfied, hell defeated, death vanquished and glory obtained. And when the poor sinner sees and feels this in his conscience, he has the spiritual blessing of deliverance from guilt and condemnation, and is brought into the glorious liberty of the gospel. "Stand fast therefore in the liberty with which Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." And again, "If the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed."

Our freedom from the curse is a spiritual blessing in our covenant Head. Paul felt it, and said, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." The spirit of liberty, gospel freedom, sweet peace in the conscience, pardon and redemption is all in Christ, my friends. And if we are blessed with these spiritual blessings in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are safe and secure to all eternity. The soul that has a saving interest in Christ, the great Redeemer, is as sure of heaven as if he were there already. It is not as some freewillers wickedly tell their hearers: "There are thousands in hell for whom Christ shed his blood." O no, this can never be the case; for the Father has declared of the Son, "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." He could never be satisfied if the purchase of his blood, the ransom of his life, were to be lifting up their eyes in hell. "The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." It is in Christ, my friends. The Lord keep you and me looking by precious faith to the Person of the great Redeemer, to his

blood shedding and justifying righteousness, for peace and salvation. It is the test of the household of faith.

Now, let us speak a word or two on Christian experience, in reference to the feelings that a Christian man finds working in his mind. Sin is the bane and plague of a child of God. It is in his heart and in his thoughts, and he cannot get rid of it. It goes with him wherever he goes, and abides with him wherever he stays; and the misery which he feels on account of these things often makes him cry out with Job, "O Lord, I am vile." "What a wretch I am!" I tell you, my friends, if I were called by others what I frequently call myself, it would make me very angry; I would not like to be called such ugly names. But I cannot find any language vile enough to call myself in my own mind. The poor soul finds language beggared in describing what he sees of the depravity, guilt and wretchedness of his evil heart and fallen nature.

But the mercy is, poor sinner, though you are black in yourself, you are beautiful and lovely and without spot in a precious Christ. You are quite safe and secure in his blessed hands. He has put away all your sins and iniquities, and has blotted them out as a thick cloud, and says, "When they are sought for, they shall not be found." He has removed forever the curse of the law from you; therefore it is written, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." We can, therefore, now sing with the poet,

"Believing, we rejoice,

To see the curse remove;

We bless the Lamb with cheerful voice,

And sing his bleeding love."

Yes, poor soul, you will find it all right at last; you are as sure of heaven as though you were there already. It is the will of your Father that when you are absent from the body, you shall be present with the Lord. The dear Redeemer will have the purchase of his soul with him; and he says, "Father I will that they also, whom you have given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory." This is often a degree of strength, comfort and consolation to living souls. The poor sinner knows and feels what he is in himself as a worthless worm; but he rejoices in Christ Jesus, while he can put no trust or confidence in himself.

The spiritual blessings of redemption, peace, pardon, gospel liberty and rest for the soul come through the dear Redeemer alone. I do not know whether you London folks find rest, peace and comfort anywhere else, but I know I do not. I find no rest, no confidence, no joy for my heart but in the glorious Person, the finished work, the justifying righteousness and complete salvation of my incarnate God; and that has hitherto, and I believe it will continue to sustain me through every storm, tempest and trial that I may have to meet with to the end of my days. But it is all in a precious Christ. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

IV. But we observe, fourthly, that another spiritual blessing which is treasured up in Christ is his atoning blood. O what a blessed remedy this is for the worst of all maladies, the worst of all diseases! No disease ever did or can exist equal to the malady of sin, and for that very reason it is called a plague. There are many disorders which come upon the body, but they fall short of a plague. A plague is the worst kind of disease that can break out among mortals. When a plague bursts out in a populous district, it has been known to make dreadful work. We have heard, and some of us have read, of the plague that once broke

out in this great metropolis, and how it swept away thousands upon thousands.

At the dedication of the temple, when Solomon, who was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ, stood praying for the Lord's blessing to rest on his church and people, among other things in his petition he particularly makes use of this plea before the Lord, that he would hear and regard from heaven every man that should know "the plague of his own heart" - the torment of his carnal heart, his refractory, rebellious, fretful heart, where swarms of evil thoughts and vain imaginations abound, which often makes the child of God so sick and weary of himself that he knows not what to do.

I knew a simple man in the country who was so plagued with the workings of his evil heart that to get a little ease from his torments, he thought he would try to walk it away. He set off walking and walking, and then he took to running as fast as he could until he was out of breath. But there it was in his heart, working, fretting and foaming. He could not get rid of it, nor run away from it; he felt the plague of his heart, and could only cry, "O wretched man that I am!" But after a time the Lord applied his precious, atoning blood to his conscience, and that gave him ease. And nothing but the blood of the Lamb can take away the hurt or stop the plague of sin in the heart.

Blessed be God, in our text we have a great Deliverer set forth; and that Deliverer is a precious Christ. He is the great High Priest over the house of God, and the remedy is his atoning blood, the balm of Gilead. Poor soul, do you want your conscience to be cleansed, your heart to be purified, and your sin and guilt to be washed away? Where can you look for these things but to a precious Christ? The blessing is in Christ, my friends, and nowhere else. My soul lives upon the truths I preach, and God forbid that I should speak anything to you but what I have experienced the blessedness of in my own soul.

Now the Lord says by the prophet, "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness." This is the precious blood of Jesus, Immanuel, the incarnate God. And what is this fountain opened for? "For sin and for uncleanness." So that if you have no knowledge of sin and uncleanness, the fountain is not opened for you; it is opened for the guilty, the vile and the filthy in their feelings. Come then, poor black and leprous sinners, to the fountain. I love the song-

"Black, I to the fountain fly,

Wash me, Savior, or I die."

Come to the fountain; it is opened for those who feel the plague of their heart, who are burdened with sin and uncleanness, and whose cry is with the leper of old, "Unclean, unclean." This fountain is opened to cleanse you from sin and to purify you from uncleanness. "Ah," says the poor child of God, "I want to get at it, and cannot." You may want to get at it by your own wisdom and strength; but, blessed be the Lord, it is not left to your getting. If you could get it when you would, then you could do the work of the Holy Spirit.

But God has determined that you shall not do his work; hence the dear Redeemer tells his disciples that "when he, the Spirit of truth has come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." The blessed Spirit takes the atoning blood of the Lamb and applies it to the conscience of the poor sinner; he removes the burden of sin and softens the heart; and the dear child of God feels the blessedness of that text, which I cannot speak without feeling its blessed and solemn import: "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin." This is its

blessed effect. And the redeemed soul for a while sings in this valley of tears the same song as the glorified spirits above: "Unto him that has loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever." "For if the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." It is in Christ, my friends. The Holy Spirit takes the atoning blood of the Lamb, applies it afresh to the conscience with power, and bears witness to the spirit of the living family that they are the redeemed of the Lord. May we glory only in a precious Christ! "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

Now my friends, your time is gone, and the strength of my body begins to fail me through much preaching. By way of CONCLUSION, therefore, let me ask, what do you know of these things for yourself? Let me pause then for a moment and give you time to think. Do you see your lost, ruined and undone state and condition as a sinner before the Lord? Do you feel the need of that salvation which is in Christ? Are you led by the teachings of the blessed Spirit of God never to expect acceptance or justification before him on the ground of you own doings? Is it the earnest desire and prayer of your soul to be saved completely by the redemption that is in Christ Jesus? Are you looking by faith to the great Redeemer for the washing away of all your sins through his precious blood? Is the Lord Jesus Christ the Rock on which your soul rests for life and salvation? Are you confiding and trusting in him as your great High Priest before the throne? If so, the Spirit has begun the work of grace in your soul; and he that has begun it will surely carry it on; and when the great conflagration of all things shall take place, you shall shout the triumphs of the Lamb, exalt his precious name, and glorify his great salvation forever and ever.

But am I speaking to any individuals present who are strangers to these great and glorious truths in the experimental feelings of their heart and soul before the Lord? If I am, it is my province to declare to such of you as are careless about these solemn and eternal things that you are living without God and without hope in the world; that "God is angry with the wicked every day"; and that if you live and die in this state, enemies to God and his Word, you will die under the wrath of God and the curse of his holy law. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." God, outside of Christ, is "a consuming fire." If you live and die in impenitency and hardness of heart, you will fall into a fire that never can be quenched.

But how different the state and prospect of the poor child of God, who is resting by faith upon the dear Redeemer! Pondering over these things in my mind this afternoon, I was desirous that I might be made a blessing to the Lord's children this evening. I felt a little comfort in my own soul while meditating on the words of the text; and I wanted to preach to the people of God the things which I have looked upon and handled and felt in my own experience of the Word of life.

And now, may we drop into the hands and everlasting arms of the dear Redeemer as poor guilty sinners. Then we shall be safe in every storm and tempest, while passing through this valley of tears, and at last live and reign with him in glory above forever and ever.

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