

THE PRODIGAL SON

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LONDON:
JAMES CARTER, 13, PATERNOSTER ROW,
E.C. 4.

THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON.

(Luke xv. 11-32).

AND He said, A certain man had two sons: and the younger of them said to *his* father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to *me*. And he divided unto them *his* living.

And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living. And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and

put a ring on his hand, and shoes on *his* feet : and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill *it* ; and let us eat, and be merry : for this my son was dead, and is alive again ; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

Now his elder son was in the field : and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing. And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant. And he said unto him, Thy brother is come ; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in : therefore came his father out, and intreated him. And he answering said to *his* father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment : and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends : but as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad : for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again ; and was lost, and is found.

I.—SPENDING ALL.

OUR subject to-night is the first of a series of five addresses on the Prodigal Son, but we must remember that the whole of Luke xv. is one parable, setting before us the three Persons of the Godhead, and their work and joy in saving the lost.

The Lord Jesus Christ, as God the Son, goes after the lost sheep until He finds it, which is in death itself.

The woman, representing God the Holy Spirit, with lighted candle—the Word of God—sweeping the house, and in so doing removes that which hinders lost souls from coming in contact with God through His Word, sweeping away hindrances and leading to the finding of the lost.

The third portion of the parable sets before us the returning prodigal and the joy of God the Father in receiving him safe and sound.

In coming now to our subject, "Spending All," we will treat it under the three headings set out in these questions :

First. What have prodigals got to spend?

Second. What satisfaction for time and eternity is obtained from "Spending All"?

Third. What does God do while we are spending all?

First. **WHAT HAVE PRODIGALS GOT TO SPEND?**

I have no doubt that the prodigal represents every child of Adam who has turned to his own way, and spent the gifts of God in the service of Satan. The question is, "What have they got to spend?"

In the scripture we have already read, we see that God giveth to all life, and breath, and

all things. These words were spoken by Paul at Athens, and he tells the idolaters of the Creator God who has given to everyone life, breath, and all things; and God tells everyone here to-night that He has given you life and breath and all things. (Acts xvii. 22-28.)

The question is, what are you doing with that which God has given you?

What is life? James tells us in his fourth chapter, verse 14, "It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." Your life cannot be long at its longest. What are you doing with it?

What is breath? The Book of Job, chapter xi. verse 20, speaking of the wicked, says, "Their hope shall be as a puff of breath" (marginal reading.) Your brightest hopes, if unsaved, are of no more value than "a puff of breath."

Many of you were here last Lord's Day evening, and have drawn a good many breaths since then, but each one has brought you nearer the last. Don't be like Saul, who breathed out threatenings and slaughter against the Lord's people, and the Lord said it was against Himself. (Acts ix. 4.) How true the Lord's words, "He that is not with Me is against Me"!

"ALL THINGS." What does that mean? Surely it means your health, strength, talents, skill, influence, money, body, with its various members. What are you doing with them? What did the prodigal do with that which he received from his father? Three things: First. Gathered all together. Second. Wasted his substance. Third. Spent all. And that is what you, who are unsaved, who are in the far country

away from God, have done and are doing with your life and breath and all things. You say, How? I will tell you.

"He gathered all together." You have, no doubt, gathered all together; that is, you have made your plans for the future. A young man asked another in the street one day, "Which is the nearest way to so-and-so police station?" "I don't know," he replied, "but why do you ask me?" He said, "I've spent all in drink, and I want a night's lodging." "Oh! and suppose you get it, what then?" "I have decided to turn over, and give up the drink, and then I shall seek for employment to enable me to maintain my wife and children and my dear old mother." "Well, suppose you are able to do that, *WHAT THEN?*" "I then hope to be able to save and lay up for the time to come when I shall be *an old man.*" "Well," said the other, "if you are successful, *WHAT THEN?*" He replied, "I know what you mean, then I suppose I must die." "Yes, and *WHAT THEN?*"

Ah! my friends, that's the question: *WHAT THEN?*

You gather all together and make wonderful plans for the future, but you forget eternity. *WHAT THEN?*

"**HE WASTED HIS SUBSTANCE.**" Perhaps you have done the same. Up to now your life has been wasted; your breath, which God holds in His hand, has been wasted. Your health and strength have been wasted, if you are unsaved; because they have been used for self and Satan instead of God, and unless you are born again you cannot please God. Your talents and skill have been wasted.

There was once a young man who left his home, and joined with some other young fellows a minstrel troupe. God had given him a talent, a good voice. They blackened their faces, and went to some watering-place to perform, and to try to amuse their fellow travellers to eternity by singing comic songs. One day, they were performing in a street, and the one I am speaking about went round for money; he asked a gentleman in a shop for some.

He said, "I'll give you one shilling and this book besides if you will read a portion of it among your comrades there, and in the hearing of the bystanders." He handed him a Bible opened at Luke xv., and told him to read from verse 11.

The young fellow took it as a joke, so, saying, "Here goes!" he began to read: "A certain man had two sons, and the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living. And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance in riotous living."

"That's thee, Jem," said one of his companions; "it's just like what you told me of yourself and your father."

The reader continued: "And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want."

"Why, that's thee, Jem, again; go on," said the voice.

"And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his

belly with the husks that the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him."

"That's like us all," said the voice. "Go on; let's hear what came of it!"

And the young man read on, and as he read his voice trembled: "And when he came to himself he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father!"

At this point he fairly broke down, and could read no more. Thank God! it reached his conscience, and he returned home; but better still he was led to see himself as a guilty sinner, away from God, and then was brought to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour, and so was received and forgiven by the God he had sinned against.

If you are not at peace with God, everything you do is wasted; it has no value with God.

My friends, what are you doing with all the things God has given you? God wants you.

I well remember going to a Sunday School treat some years ago. There came on a shower of rain, and all the teachers and children had to take shelter in a large tea room. There was present a dear brother in the Lord who had a fine voice. In his unconverted days he was an actor, so had many times used that voice on the stage to amuse the godless and careless; but now all was changed. He looked at the company, and then began to sing:—

"Where will you spend eternity?

This question comes to you and me.

Tell me, what shall your answer be:

Where will you spend eternity?"

That is the way to use your talents and skill; they won't be wasted if yielded to the Lord under the Holy Spirit's guidance; but for that you must have a new life through believing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

“HE SPENT ALL.” Are you spending all in the far country? If so, it will end in starvation; it always does. May you find it out before it is too late, and may God help you to return to Him. “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Rom. vi. 23.)

Second. We now come to the second question.

WHAT SATISFACTION FOR TIME AND ETERNITY IS OBTAINED FROM “SPENDING ALL”?

In looking at this question we must bear in mind that when we spend our all away from God it is sin. Even an outwardly blameless life away from God is sin. The prodigal was as much a sinner when he left his father as when he was running riot in the distance, or starving among the swine. So are you, if unconverted, unsaved, your every act is sin, because you are in rebellion against God, because you are rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ, whom God presents to you as a Saviour; and for your sins the wages is death. “The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” “It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment.” (Heb. ix. 27.) Those two things, death and judgment, take the satisfaction for time and eternity out of everything our hearts go after in nature.

The answer to our question then is, “NONE.” No satisfaction now, no satisfaction HEREAFTER, from spending all as the prodigal did. No

doubt we have all experienced an unsatisfied, unhappy feeling after we have been seeking to enjoy ourselves away from God. And what is it? Surely it is death. As the scripture says, "She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth." (1 Tim. v. 6.) You do not like to think it is death which may end in eternal death if you remain where you are.

I want to tell you of a young man whose name was Ralph. He was stricken down with consumption. He thought he was going to recover as the warmer weather came round, but the doctor knew differently. He got weaker and weaker. One day he overheard the doctor say he was near the end; might not live till the next day. It was a great shock to him. After the doctor had gone he said to his mother, "Mother, I'm not dying, am I?" She said, "I thought you knew." He said, "Knew! How was I to know? What has a gay young fellow like me to do with death? I love life, and health, and strength; and fun and frolic; and sports and pastimes; and drinking and betting too, if you like. I don't want to die."

You see he was like a lot more, he did not want to die, but still death stared him in the face. After some minutes he said, "Mother, what will happen to me; to my soul, I mean? It has only just struck me that I have a soul, and after death the judgment. I'm dying and there is nothing before me but the blackness of darkness. I'm lost, lost; lost for ever and evermore."

His mother told him to rest; but he said, "How can I rest with an awful eternity staring me in the face? Mother, tell me what to do, you ought to have told me I should come to this, that one

day I should have to face eternity, with all the deeds of my sinful life bearing me down, down into the awful blackness. By the way, now I think of it, I never remember hearing you mention the name of God except in church, you never taught me a prayer. O mother, why didn't you tell me?"

His mother cried bitterly, kneeling at his bedside.

He placed his hand on her head and said, "Never mind, mother dear, perhaps you did not know. Do send for someone who does know."

She sent at once for a young man, a preacher of the gospel. After some hours, he came, being away at the time he was sent for. On entering the room he found poor Ralph very weak. As he came near the bed Ralph said, "I'm dying, I've only a few minutes to live. Show me the shortest road to heaven." The visitor sat down, and with opened Bible showed him that God knew all about his past, how that he had had health, talents, riches, influence, and power to do much good, and now on a deathbed his eyes were suddenly opened to see that he had spent all for self; no thought of God who so loved him. He quoted John iii. 16 : "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

"Jesus died for such as you," he said. "He loves you. For Christ's sake the Father is willing, yea more than willing, to forgive all the sins of the past, and to receive you now. Throw yourself entirely on His mercy, Ralph, and He will not fail you. Christ died for the ungodly."

He replied, "It's too late, too late; I've missed

the way to heaven; I can only see an eternity of woe."

He then thought of his companions, and asked his Christian friend to warn them. "Tell them," he said, "about me. Tell them not to put it off till the end. They'll make splendid Christians, they're not bad fellows, and I was not worse than them, but I forgot about death; I was too busy with the world's pleasures to think about your God."

After a short period of unconsciousness Ralph again opened his eyes, and then said, "Too late for me. Remember the others and my mother." And he was gone. Yes, passed into eternity, spent all for self and Satan here, and missed heaven. May God grant that it will never happen to anyone here to-night.

Does spending all in this way, satisfy for time and eternity? No. If I were to ask any here who are unsaved to say if they are perfectly satisfied, I feel sure they could not say, Yes. I ask, Is there one here who can testify that although unsaved, they enjoy perfect satisfaction? Not one!— But how different those here who are saved. I now ask all those who are saved and have found satisfaction in the Saviour who has saved them, to stand up and sing,

"Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine,
Oh what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Saviour all the day long."

You've seen us stand, and heard what we can sing. May God help you to see where you are, and to flee to the Saviour to-night.

Third. Our third question is

WHAT DOES GOD DO WHILE WE ARE "SPENDING ALL"?

In Job xxxiii. we read that GOD SPEAKS. In Matthew iii. some were asked, "Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" Yes, God warns, and He also calls. Every time you hear Him say, "Whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life," it is God calling you in the gospel.

We see then, that, first, GOD SPEAKS; secondly, GOD WARNS; thirdly, GOD CALLS.

First. Why does He SPEAK? Referring again to Job xxxiii., it says it is "to turn man from his purpose." If your purpose is to continue with your back to God, He speaks to you that you may be turned, yes, turned to God from idols. Why not say, like the prodigal, "I have sinned." Then God will say, "Deliver him from going down to the pit for I have found a ransom." "Deliver him," says God, "I have found a ransom." Who is it? The Lord Jesus Christ who died for sinners, yes, went into the pit in their stead. The ransom price has been paid, and God can save you to-night. Why not let Him?

Secondly. GOD WARNS. I cannot tell you in how many ways God warns sinners of their danger. He has warned you time after time. Have you taken heed to His warning voice? If not you will live to regret it. I expect most of you have heard of that man who had charge of a

swing bridge over a river. The bridge was used by the railway, and this man one day received a warning that an excursion train containing six hundred people was to pass over between two and four o'clock, and therefore on no account was he to swing open the bridge for vessels to pass during those hours. Soon after two o'clock a man came up the river in his boat and wanted the bridge opened. The keeper said, "No, I can't do it." Soon after, another offered him five shillings if he would let him pass. Again the keeper said, "No." Later, a very great friend came up and wanted him to open the bridge; he pleaded with him, saying that half his fortune depended on his catching the tide. He was so earnest in his pleading that the keeper gave way, and opened the bridge. He had just done so, when he heard the train coming. Although he tried hard to attract the driver's attention, it was too late, and the train dashed into the river.

This poor man did not heed the warning. He was found after the awful accident wandering up and down, and crying, "Oh, if I only had. Oh, if I only had!" over and over again, and he was quite insane.

Many years after this, in a lunatic asylum he was pacing his cell saying over and over again, "Oh, if I only had." And this was all through not taking the warning; and I've no doubt that many will spend eternity away from God and for ever and ever say, "Oh, if I only had!" received the warning voice, and accepted God's offer in Christ." But it will then be too late. Thank God! it's not too late now. Be warned in time, I implore you.

Thirdly. GOD CALLS. With open arms and a

heart overflowing with love He calls sinners to repentance. Listen to His call now, and respond to it too, for you can be saved to-night.

One evening a miner attended a gospel meeting, and he heard the preacher say that any soul who desired to be saved could have the matter settled that night. This man was anxious to be saved, so after the meeting he told the preacher, and they both went on their knees. But although he was in great earnest he did not, until three o'clock next morning, receive the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour, but when he did he was full of joy.

He had no sleep that night, and went to the mine at six o'clock. During the day there was a fall of earth, and this very man was buried under it. A rescue party worked hard to get at him, and when he was uncovered he could only just whisper; his strength was nearly gone.

One of the rescuers put his ear to his mouth to hear what he was saying, and heard him say, "Thank God, it was settled last night." And so he passed into eternity; saved by grace just in time.

May it be the same with you, for it is true that you can be saved to-night. God's call sounds still. Respond to it at once, for Christ's sake.

II.—PERISHING.

LAST Sunday evening we saw and learnt what it means to spend all; we saw what God has given every soul to spend—life, breath, and all things. To-night we shall see and learn to what it leads.

When the prodigal son crossed the threshold of his father's home his pockets were full and his banking account was heavy. Everything was all right. As soon as he got into the far country he thought it was going to last. But it did not.

Let us look at the subject of "PERISHING" from

1. THE CAUSES AND THEIR LESSON.
2. THE FACT AND ITS LESSON.
3. THE RESULT AND ITS LESSON.

1. THE CAUSES AND THEIR LESSON.

We partly dealt with what the causes and their lesson were last week, when we spoke of how the prodigal spent his all. Between his spending all and his confession, "I perish with hunger," we see two more steps. They are the "mighty famine" and being "in want." It was afterward that he cried, "I perish with hunger; I will arise, and go to my father."

After he had spent all there arose a mighty famine, and he began to be in want. Friends, is there a mighty famine in your land? You ask me what do I mean? There might be a great famine in your land, and perhaps you are in want. This parable has a word for every soul in this room to-night. I mean you have been given life and breath and all things by God, but the question is, Have you yet found out your dependence on Him? Why did the prodigal say, "I

perish with hunger"? Surely the mighty famine in the land had something to do with it.

God is dealing with every one of us here to-night; it does not matter who we are, and the steps God uses in His dealings with us are wonderful. Like a young man who was converted, and when asked how he was converted, replied, "I did my part, and God did His." When questioned as to his part, he said, "My part was to run away, and God's part was to run after me until He found me."

Every single soul here that knows the Father's grace, love and forgiveness can say that is true.

When the prodigal cried, "I perish with hunger," it was God's way of dealing with him that brought him to it. I love to hear of God's wonderful ways of dealing with us. I have watched many souls as God has dealt with them and brought them to the point where they have put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. I have seen them in fear and trembling, and then rejoicing in the love of God. The ways and causes which led these souls to rejoice are just the same as we see brought out so beautifully in Luke xv.

The mighty famine comes when something stands in our pathway and retards our joys; the mighty famine is when nothing around us satisfies. And then God opens our hearts, and gives us light. May He open the eyes of every unsaved person here to-night. Let Him open your eyes; very soon you may be landed into eternity, and, if unsaved, to eternal doom.

I want to tell you of a young man who was brought, through the goodness of God, into blessing by these various steps.

When the young man became of age, his father,

a wealthy man, arranged a ball and dinner, to which the friends and relatives were invited. The young man had a wealthy uncle who was a devout Christian, and the nephew used to avoid him as much as possible, because the uncle used often to speak to him about his soul. On this particular day the uncle asked his nephew to walk with him in the garden. The uncle said, "I suppose you think I am going to speak to you about religion?"

The nephew replied in the affirmative.

The uncle said, "I am not going to say anything about it, but will you do one thing for me? Take this piece of paper home with you, and before you go to bed read it. There is one blank place left; fill it in before you go to bed."

The young man promised to do as his uncle asked, and in the early hours of the morning when he retired after the festivities of the birthday, he took out the piece of paper, and opened it and read, "For to me to live is—" and there was a blank space. In the corner of the paper he saw something about Philippians 1. He secured a Bible, opened it, and read, "For to me to live is Christ."

The young man said, "I cannot fill it in; what shall I do? I promised uncle I would. I must put something." So after thinking it over he filled in the paper, "For to me to live is to enjoy myself." He got into bed, and slept.

Years passed away, and the young man got married, and had one daughter. Everything went on all right until a financial crash overtook him, and he lost all his money. He had to leave his lovely house and all his furniture was sold—ruined at one stroke. When various articles were being

taken away, his little daughter came up to him, and said, "Look at what I have found in the drawer."

It was a little piece of paper, and on it were the words, "For to me to live is to enjoy myself."

How different everything looked now. Once he thought that "For to me to live is to enjoy myself," but it had not proved true; the enjoyment had gone out of his pathway; he was a ruined man; and not bearing his daughter to see him in such a position, he went to his room, and cried to God that he might be able to write "For to me to live is Christ."

God answered his prayer, and there alone in his room he received Christ, trusting in Him as His Saviour; and then wrote with truth, "For to me to live is Christ."

Cannot you see God's ways with this soul in grace? He did not want Christ on the eve of the birthday party; but there came a time later when he began to be in want; yes, he wanted Christ then. The story reveals a mighty famine in the land, and the "want" that follows. God opens our eyes to shew us that we may be lost eternally if we go on with our backs towards Him.

I believe that in Luke xv. the prodigal son was brought on by these various steps—famine and want—until without anything in his pockets, and a mighty famine in the land he cried, "I perish with hunger." The things which will cause us to say the same are God's wonderful ways with us in bringing us to see our lost condition and that we may eternally perish if we do not accept His love and forgiveness.

2. THE FACT AND ITS LESSON

is the second point. The fact is that there is a great number of souls in this room to-night who are perishing. It may be that their eyes are not opened yet, but one thing is clear ; every unsaved soul is a perishing soul. Do you realise that if you are unsaved you are condemned already? Read John iii., verse 18 : " He that believeth on Him is not condemned ; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." If you are going on like that you may land for ever where mercy cannot reach you. Perhaps God has not yet opened your eyes ; perhaps the god of this world is blinding your eyes, as in the story I have told you. As long as you are unsaved the wrath of God abideth upon you. It is an awful position to be in. I pray God to open your eyes. He can do it.

I once heard of a young professional pick-pocket and thief for whom a Christian man prayed twice a day for fourteen years. The young thief went on his course until one day he was arrested, and given five days for disorderly conduct. He had to work his time on a vessel that was full of corpses in boxes, and when he ate his dinner he had to use one of these boxes as a table. In the presence of death God spoke to this young man, and he promised to go straight to the Mission if he could get out of the boat. The thief was found at the Mission three nights in succession, and on the third he found peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

See how that man's eyes were opened. I trust that God will open the eyes of everyone here to the fact, the strong fact, that if you are unsaved

you are perishing. God does not want you to perish ; He wishes to give you everlasting life.

A preacher once went to preach to some convicts in a prison. Instead of preaching in a room with the men present he had to preach in a corridor on each side of which were cells. After he had finished he went from cell to cell to hear what the men had to say ; and from what he heard he came to the conclusion that the wrong men were in prison, and that those who should be there were free. At last he came to one cell, and when he opened the door he saw a man with tears streaming down his face and holding his head in his hands.

The preacher spoke, and the man replied, "My sins are greater than I can bear."

He replied, " Thank God for it. Why do you say they are too heavy when God will cast aside the burden ? "

The convict realised the fact that he was perishing, he had heard about Christ dying on the cross that we might live. The gospel was no new story to him.

The next day, when the preacher went to see him, he found him rejoicing, and was told that he was glad he was sent to that prison, because God had shown him that his sins were greater than he could bear, but also that the One Who died on Calvary had taken them all away. The convict had to have his eyes opened to see his sins, and in that way God showed him that he was perishing.

Even when God opens the eyes of a lot of people, and says to them that they are lost, they try do the best they can for themselves. This is what the prodigal did. When he joined a citizen

of that country he was sent to feed the swine, and he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat, but no one gave to him. Then it was that he came to himself and said, "I will arise, and go to my father; and I will say unto him" (like the man in the prison), "I have sinned," yes, "My sins are greater than I can bear."

Have you got hold of the fact that without Christ you are perishing? God's word says in John iii. verse 36: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." With the wrath of God abiding on you, you are perishing; our scripture says "perish with hunger." What a fact! How true! Always desiring something to satisfy, but never able to find it. You want it, you want Christ. He can satisfy. "Whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish."

The fact that your soul is hungering after something shows that you are not satisfied, you are starving, absolutely starving, a starving man will do anything. The prodigal did the wrong thing; he took a situation with a farmer to keep his pigs and was still starving.

Do you remember when you said, "I will do differently; I'll live a different life! I will try to deserve to be saved"? And you have been feeding swine for salvation, and are still starving. You are doing the wrong thing; stop, before it is too late.

3. WHAT WAS THE RESULT?

The result was that he said, "I will arise, and go to my father." I wish to bring home to your

hearts to-night the point of decision. Have you decided to go to God as you are, and confess your sins? May God help you to confess to-night. Perhaps you have not realised yet that you are lost; may God open your eyes to see it, and that soon.

Sometimes there is, in the history of souls, a long time between the knowledge that they are perishing and the time when they decide to come into the presence of God. In the case of the prodigal it was some time; and here we see the wonderful way God works step by step to bring souls to Himself.

Many years ago there lived at Hayle a man who said he did not believe in the existence of God or of eternal punishment hereafter. A preacher who had heard that the man had been listening outside the place where he was preaching on a certain Sunday, called on him the following day. The man told the preacher that he did not have any sleep the night before, and that he did not feel at all well.

“What is the matter with you; are you thinking about your soul?” asked the preacher.

The man replied in the negative, but the preacher saw it was something more than his body that was troubling him. He talked to the man again about his soul, and found that something happened fourteen years before that he had kept a profound secret. The man told the preacher that he had a dream in which he was walking along a wide, lovely road with flowers on either side, everything looked beautiful, and the people he met looked happy. As he went on he saw a man in a field close by and asked him where the road led.

"To hell," was the reply; "straight on, you cannot miss it."

As the man went on the road he found that the sun did not shine so brightly; it began to get gloomy and dark, and there was a smell of sulphur.

He wanted to know the way back, and he saw some creatures with long rakes. He wondered what they were doing, and found that they were raking cinders, as every now and then flames shot up in the roadway. One of them looked towards him, and he asked, "How can I get out of this?"

The creature stared at him, and after a time answered, "The same way as you came in."

The man fell on his knees, but the ground was so hot that he could not bear it. He ran he knew not where; but as he went leaping from one safe place to another over the open places in the road where the flames were rising. At last a huge fire lay before him, and he fell into it.

Then he woke up, and he told the preacher that he had kept the dream a secret for fourteen years. It had haunted him day and night.

God allowed his visitor to speak solemnly to the man before he left, and the man's eyes were opened to the fact that he was perishing. When he saw him again he spoke about the prodigal and the mighty famine, and with the Bible open at Luke xv. he went on his knees, and remained there for four hours. Then he confessed that he was a sinner, and learned, in the presence of God, that Christ was his Saviour, and also received the forgiveness of his sins, and thanked God for what He had done. His rejoicing was heard by the next door neighbour, a Christian man, who,

wondering what had happened, looked in and saw him giving praise to God.

God in His infinite grace can save you, too. All you have to do is to receive His salvation in Christ. You who are perishing, arise, and go straight to Him Who will forgive you; make the decision now, and rejoice in the Lord Jesus as your Saviour. Remember, the prodigal did not continue doing the wrong thing; he changed his mind, he came to himself, and said, "I will arise, and go to my father."

Friend, I beseech you, stop doing the wrong thing, and think of what is all ready for you in God's house. You know how often you have despised what God has to give; but change your mind and value what you once despised. That is what the prodigal did, so now you, who have despised Christ and God's salvation, do the same, and joy and satisfaction will be yours for all eternity.

III.—THE FATHER'S KISS.

WE take to-night the third of the series of addresses on the Prodigal Son. The subject is to be "The Father's Kiss," and I propose to consider

1. ON WHAT GROUND COULD THE FATHER KISS THE PRODIGAL?
2. WHAT LESSON DO WE LEARN FROM THE FATHER'S TREATMENT OF THE PRODIGAL?
3. WHAT EFFECT HAD THE KISS UPON HIM?
1. ON WHAT GROUND COULD THE FATHER KISS THE PRODIGAL?

The father's kiss had a very great meaning. What was it? I believe it was a *forgiving kiss*. I believe it teaches us that God is a *forgiving God*, and that notwithstanding the fact that most here have sinned for years, yet God's kiss of *forgiveness* can be yours to-night. I believe that to be the very truth.

But our first point is, On what ground can it be done? You say it was love. I think it was more than love; it was sovereign love and sovereign grace; that is, unmerited favour. Did he deserve *forgiveness*? No. Do you deserve *forgiveness*? No. So we read in Romans iii. verse 24, "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." God does not act towards us according to our *deserts*. He acts in sovereign grace.

There is a story of a missionary who was hated by a native of the place he was working in. One day the native found the missionary's daughter, a little girl, alone in the woods. He took her, and with the hatchet he was carrying, he cut off both

her hands. Many years after the girl was alone at home, and a man came to the door. He said he was starving, so she told the maid to give him a good dinner. She sat and watched him eat it, knowing all the time that it was the man who had cut her hands off. After he had finished she let a cloth fall, and then showed him her arms.

That was grace, acting towards another (and that an enemy) in love when he did not deserve it. Scripture says we are enemies of God by wicked works; yet God loves us, and in His grace forgives every one who comes to Him believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, God is a "God of all grace" so must act in grace toward man.

But there is another thing which characterises God. He is faithful and He is also just. As it says, "A just God, and a Saviour." In 1 John i., verse 9, it says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." God does not only forgive on the ground of grace but also on the ground of faithfulness and justice. The prodigal confessed his sins, and was forgiven; and God can forgive you your sins, and will, if you confess them; but remember, when He forgives, He is faithful in doing it.

I want you to think of the words of the Lord Jesus Christ when He was hanging between two thieves, hated by man, suffering from the most intense agony, and being mocked by the very ones He came to save. Just listen to His words: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." (Luke xxiii. 34.)

God forgives in faithfulness to the dying request of His own Son. The forgiving kiss is on the ground of divine faithfulness. But God also for-

gives on the ground of divine justice. Romans iii., verse 26, tells us that He is "just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

Again we turn to the Cross to see God's justice. He cannot pass over sin, although He desires to bless the sinner, so we see the just and holy God punishing His only begotten Son on the Cross of Calvary, thereby making a divinely just ground on which He could forgive every soul who comes to Him for mercy and forgiveness. You and I who have been forgiven can say, "It is because Jesus was punished instead of me."

Many years ago a ruler made a law that for a certain offence the culprit should have both his eyes put out. The first to break the law was his own son. He had a great desire to forgive him, but knew he could not be just in doing so. He therefore gave sentence that one of his own eyes should be put out, and one of his son's. The ruler's justice could not then be called in question. Yet his love for his son was shown by his bearing half of the punishment. God's justice and love are shown by His own Son bearing *all* the punishment.

We see then, GRACE, FAITHFULNESS, AND JUSTICE are grounds on which God forgives sins. Now I say, Are you forgiven? Have you received the Father's kiss? Have you learned, in the Father's arms, that His heart yearns over you, and that, notwithstanding the tremendous cost, He can freely forgive you? If not, look at Calvary, and see what it cost Him there. Have you a son, one you greatly love, perhaps an only son, the joy and pride of your heart? Ask yourself the question, "How should I feel if I saw my son taken by my very enemies, and spat upon, smitten in the face, crowned with thorns, receiving many stripes on

his bared back till all the flesh was torn and bleeding. Then taken by these same enemies, and laid down on a cross, and both hands and feet nailed to the cross, which is then lifted and dropped into a hole in the rock, and your son left there to die a death of the most awful suffering it is possible to bear. If while suffering thus you heard your son cry, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," what would you do?

The God who will forgive you if you come to Him to-night saw His well-beloved Son taken by those with hearts like yours and mine, spat upon, smitten in the face, crowned with a crown of thorns, and then a stick brought down upon His head. Also given many stripes on His bared back till all the flesh was torn and bleeding. And then those wicked hands nailed His to a cross.

" Oh ! make me to understand it ;
Help me to take it in ;
What it meant to Thee, Thou Holy One,
To bear away my sin."

Then the cross was placed into a hole in the rock, and when God heard His cry, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," His grace went out towards those guilty men in forgiving love, in divine faithfulness to the dying request of the Blessed Saviour.

Yet for Him to forgive on a just ground He had then to turn from the Son of His love, and put the very sins He was going to forgive on His Son, so that the punishment should be borne by Him instead of by us. The greatest suffering then, that the Saviour suffered was in the three hours of darkness, when God forsook Him, and judged Him in our stead. It was God's justice led Him to judge

the Lord Jesus. It was also God's justice led Him to raise Him from the dead. Death could not hold Him after His work was done.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy Name." God can forgive now, and the risen Saviour is the testimony that it is done on the ground of divine GRACE, FAITHFULNESS and JUSTICE.

2. WHAT LESSON DO WE LEARN FROM THE FATHER'S TREATMENT OF THE PRODIGAL?

We see in that treatment five important points. "His father saw him." I think the lesson for us is that God is looking down on each one here to-night, watching you. Think of the position you are in; if away from Him. Or have you said, "I will arise."

Whatever it is, He sees you, and is ready to meet you as soon as you put your decision into practice; and, remember, from what we have already had before us, that His heart is full of love while He looks down upon you now.

2. "He had compassion." Yes, as we have just said, loving compassion, not a bit of hatred; nothing but kindness shining from the God of all grace, causing Him

3. To run. Can it be true, such haste, such desire to show to this returning sinner the love of His heart of hearts? Yes, he "ran," we read. It brings to our minds the scriptures:

"Ready to pardon." (Neh. ix. 17.)

"Ready to forgive." (Ps. lxxxvi. 5.)

"Ready to save." (Isa. xxxviii. 20.)

God is "ready" at this very moment to run towards you, and give you the knowledge of His forgiving love. Why not come to Him now, and

learn the lesson in a practical way, of that precious truth, he "ran"?

4. He "fell on his neck." What must have been the feelings of that prodigal son when he had those arms around him? Why, all his fear was gone in an instant. What a lesson we learn from this, a lesson never to be forgotten, to learn that God is for us, and not against us.

"He saw us ruined in the Fall,
Yet loved us, notwithstanding all;
He saved us from our lost estate;
His loving kindness, oh how great!"

5. He "kissed him." The Father's kiss speaks volumes to the poor returning sinner. Yes, God kisses poor sinners, those who have hated Him, and wronged Him and His love times without number. Just think what a lesson that kiss teaches us.

Two little boys at Oxford, some time ago, were fishing in the river, and accidentally they both fell into the water. A young man was passing at the time, and plunged in after them. He was not a very good swimmer, but managed to bring them both to the bank safely. He then found himself in difficulties. The more he struggled the worse it was, with the sad result that he was drawn under the water and drowned. It was discovered afterwards that the boys' fishing-line was twisted four times round his right hand, and the hook had caught in his clothes.

The news soon reached his father and mother, who, of course, were greatly distressed; also his brother, who came home soon afterwards, but he was comforted when he heard that the boys were saved.

A few days later, two little boys were seen following close behind the coffin. After the funeral, the father of the brave lad, whose body had just been lowered into the grave, came up to the two little boys, and gave each one a kiss, and blessed them.

There was present a young man, a Christian, who that evening was to preach the gospel not far away. He went as arranged, and standing before his hearers, said, "I saw to-day what I have never seen before, a man kiss two boys who caused the death of his son." He then told them about the funeral, and showed that that is what God is doing now, kissing any who come to Him believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, notwithstanding the fact that they have caused the death of His Son.

It made a great impression on his hearers, one in particular, who was one of the worst men in that place. After the meeting this man came up to the preacher, and said, "Does God kiss like that?"

"Yes," he replied; "if you come to Him in faith believing on the Lord Jesus Christ."

He replied, "I will come to Him now."

May God grant that your decision may be the same. The result will be that you will know forgiveness, and learn the lesson taught by the Father's kiss.

Our last point is

3. WHAT EFFECT HAD THE KISS ON THE PRODIGAL?

Let us see what he did immediately after he had received the kiss. It reads, "The son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."

You see he at once owns himself (1) a sinner; (2) unworthy; (3) helpless. Notice that he left out what he had intended to say: "Make me as one of thy hired servants." When he owned himself a SINNER, UNWORTHY and HELPLESS, he owned the truth. And when you own yourself a SINNER, UNWORTHY and HELPLESS, you will own the truth about yourself, which will be of great blessing for you, for then you will be glad to be occupied with God; and His wondrous mercy having won your heart, you will desire to thank Him for such great love. It is when we really see God in all His perfections that we are able to see what we really are in His presence. There is nothing like the perfect love of God to show us our unworthiness. A picture of God's heart will do wonders.

It reminds me of the story of the girl who left her mother, and went to London. She wrote regularly for a time, then gradually left off writing, till at last the letters stopped altogether. She had got into bad company, and was living a life of sin.

Her mother came to London to seek for her, and finding a missionary who worked in the worst parts of London, asked him if he could help her. He said he thought he could, but only on the condition that she procured a hundred copies of her own photograph, and wrote under each, "Mary, I love you still; come home."

He then told her that she must allow him to take these photographs into the low parts of the city, and hang them up in the saloons and other places where her daughter might possibly see it; and he hoped by so doing to find where she was.

This was a hard thing to ask a mother to do,

but she loved her child so much that she would do anything to get her back again. Off to the photographer's she went, and as quickly as possible returned to the missionary with the hundred photographs. These were taken, and put up in the haunts where the fallen girl might come.

Not long after, this girl came into a saloon, and caught sight of the photo on the wall. Going over to it she saw at once the familiar face. "My mother," she said to herself, and then read the words underneath, "Mary, I love you still; come home."

This was more than Mary could stand. She went out of the place at once, and made straight for home. She found her mother waiting to receive her, and there in her mother's arms received the kiss of forgiveness. That photo and those loving words did it.

May God open the eyes of wandering sinners here and now to see His own picture in this portion of Luke Fifteen, and give you to hear Him say, "I love you still; come home." If you do, it will be the most blessed moment of your life.

We have seen that God's gracious, loving treatment of returning wanderers is on the ground of GRACE, FAITHFULNESS AND JUSTICE. Because of the death of Christ for you, He now stands with arms outstretched waiting to receive and forgive you this very moment. Linger not, but come now, and you will be able to say, as one did to a Christian who, after a Gospel meeting asked him if he was saved, and his reply was, "I saw God holding out His arms to receive me while you were preaching, and I came into them to-night."

My earnest prayer is that God will save you all so come now, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake.

IV.—CLOTHED.

THE prodigal son is forgiven; the father has kissed him; the father's arms are around his neck. But listen! He speaks. What does he say? "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." How true! This is true repentance, for repentance is owning that I am as bad as God knows me to be.

What is the next thing that happens? The father speaks, and says, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet." In other words, he is CLOTHED; and, God willing, that is to be our subject to-night: "CLOTHED."

Shall we see, first, WHAT THE PRODIGAL WAS CLOTHED WITH; secondly, WHEN HE WAS CLOTHED; thirdly, WHY HE WAS CLOTHED?

1. WHAT WAS THE PRODIGAL CLOTHED WITH?

We have been considering the subject on former occasions, and seen it to represent the prodigal son as a picture of a sinner receiving forgiveness from God on the ground of sovereign grace, divine faithfulness and justice.

Now, if the kiss means forgiveness, what does the robe mean?

In Isaiah lxi., verse 10, we read of one who says, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord for He hath clothed me with the GARMENTS OF SALVATION. He hath covered me with the ROBE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS." These words sound almost as if they came from the prodigal. You will notice that the ROBE is called a ROBE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. Now, this agrees with the

truth of Romans iii., verse 22, where it says, "The righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe."

I believe that Scripture shows us that the believer is covered with a robe of God's righteousness. We all know that a robe is for a covering, and we also know that we need a suitable covering if we are to abide in God's presence; so we are not surprised when we read that the father said to the servants, "Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him."

We see that man knew he needed a covering even in the garden of Eden, for Adam and Eve sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons. These fig-leaf aprons were the first robes worn by man, and they were of no more use in God's presence than the far country clothes of the prodigal were for the father's house. They, no doubt, thought they were all right, but they made a mistake; and it is quite possible that you are making the same mistake, because those aprons are a picture of the things so many people are using to try and make themselves fit for God. If you think your good deeds and right desires are able to hide your past sins you are making that mistake.

It was after Adam and Eve were disobedient they made a covering; and perhaps it was after you had found out (through God speaking to you, it may be, at these meetings) that you were a sinner, you started sewing fig-leaves together. It comes so natural to say, "I'll do all the good I can; I'll attend more meetings: I won't get angry or be unkind." So one by one these fig-

leaves are put together; but they won't do for a robe. Instead of being the best robe, they turn out to be the worst robe; for God says that all our righteousness are as filthy rags. The clothes of the far country are as much good.

Well, what is the best robe, then?

It is not *our* righteousness; it is God's righteousness.

A child was once asked why it was the *best* robe, and she answered, "Because it cost so much."

She was right, wasn't she? Yes, it cost all the agonies of Calvary and the precious blood of Christ. Read Romans iii. verse 24, and you will see that it says, "The righteousness of God, which . . . is upon all them that believe" is "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." God hath made Christ to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Cor. v. 21.) In 1 Cor. i., verse 30, it says that Christ is made unto us "righteousness." Yes, Christ Himself is God's righteousness, and because of His death and resurrection, the believer is put into Christ.

Are you in this best robe? If not, put it on now. If a believer your place is in Christ.

Once a man, after great exercise of soul, cried to God for mercy. He then tried to live a different life; but oh! how he failed! At last he was almost in despair, and God led him to Romans iii., verse 22. He saw his mistake when he read about the righteousness of God being upon all them that believe, and he said, "This is what I want; this is what God offers me; and this is what I will have." He there and then found out that Christ was his righteousness be-

fore God. This gave him perfect peace. And, thank God, it can give you the same.

The best robe, then, is a robe of righteousness, and that robe is Christ.

The father in the parable then said, "And put a ring on his hand." It was the custom in those days for men to wear rings, and we often find that rings were given. Pharaoh gave a ring to Joseph. The giving of a ring showed that the one who received it was acknowledged as in a place of special favour. The wearing of a ring might show that the wearer held a place of dignity, and in this case might show that the father acknowledged him as his son. Now, with these thoughts in our minds, we cannot doubt the Father showed it to be according to the good pleasure of his will to have the prodigal in his presence as a son, and his pleasure would be great when he saw the ring on his hand. The son would see the riches of the father's grace in bestowing this token of favour and dignity, and everyone else who saw the ring would see the kindness that was bestowed on the prodigal.

There are some verses in Ephesians i. and ii. which speak of these three thoughts in reference to believers who are saved by grace. "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will." (v. 5.) In verses 7 and 8 it says, "The riches of His grace, wherein He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence." In chapter ii., verse 7, it speaks of God showing "the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

If there is a soul here who has that ring on, don't forget that, first, GOD has great pleasure

in seeing you wear it. Second, you ought to have great pleasure in the enjoyment of such a place of favour and dignity. Third, if you let others see this ring it will be manifest TO THEM what grace and kindness has been shown to you by the God you once rejected and displeased.

Shoes also were given to the prodigal. However shamefully he had walked in the past, God now made provision for his walking differently in the future. Let us not forget that not only God, but also the world, expects to see a person walk in newness of life after they have been forgiven. I am sure that we have very much to be thankful for that God the Father has provided a pair of shoes for the forgiven one to wear. May He show us all the importance of having the feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. (Eph. vi. 15.)

The Robe of righteousness, the Ring of favour and dignity, the Shoes for the new walk, all provided and brought from the house, are what constitute the clothing of the prodigal; and love bestows them on the one who says, "I am no more worthy to be called thy son."

" It is the Father's joy to bless;
His love has found for me a dress;
A robe of spotless righteousness;
O Lamb of God, in Thee.

" Yea, in the fulness of His grace,
God put me in the children's place;
Where I may gaze upon His face,
O Lamb of God, in Thee."

2. WHEN WAS THE PRODIGAL CLOTHED?

This question is important. He was not clothed before he was kissed; and he was not clothed

after he entered the house; but he was clothed between the kiss and his being received into the father's house.

We want to remember the steps that have led to this point. He left his father's house, and spent all; was perishing with hunger; came to himself; arose, and came to his father; and, before he could say a word, his father fell on his neck and kissed him. Then he confessed his sin, and the father had him clothed so that he would be suitable to enter the house.

Have you been like the prodigal? You have been spending what God has given you; but has it led yet to the confession, "I perish"? You say, "I have got further than that; I have come to God as I am. I expected to have to pray much, and try hard to be different; but I've found out through God's Word that forgiveness is mine through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ."

Thank God for that. I trust it is true of a great many here to-night. Just believe God's word, and you'll feel God's arms about your neck; you'll feel the warmth of His great heart of love; you'll have that kiss pressed on you, and a thrill of joy will be yours that you never had before. But you must come as you are; no preparation need be made. If you think you must be clothed before being forgiven you are wrong.

A great many do make that mistake. I'll tell you of one, a lady who spent her money on tracts, which she diligently distributed. One day she was much annoyed by the message given by a preacher of the gospel; and what annoyed her was this: he said that if any are to be saved they must be all saved in the same way, the self-righteous, religious person must be saved in the

same way as the sinful woman who walks the street.

She was so upset that she made it her business to speak to the preacher. During the conversation he assured her that God's word gave but one way to be saved. She was very angry, and said, "Sir, do you know how much money I spend yearly in giving away tracts; and how much trouble and time I devote to good works? If what you say is true, I'll not spend any more of my time in this way, nor waste my money in buying any more tracts; I have a lot more now upstairs, but I'll not give away another tract."

The preacher assured her that if she was to be saved she must come as a hell-deserving sinner, and receive God's pardon in the same way as anyone else. He then persuaded her to give the tracts to him, which she did.

Then he said, "Now, your ladder is quite broken down; how can you get to heaven now? If ever you did you would be in a strange fix, for you would not know the song. You would hear others singing, 'I've been redeemed and washed in the blood of the Lamb'; but you could not sing that. You would have to sing all alone, 'I came up here by giving away tracts.' "

This bit of plain speaking did the lady a lot of good, and she saw her true position. Although the position and process were most painful to her, she did at last take God's way, and came as a poor sinner, and accepted God's gift of grace, and rejoiced in the Saviour of sinners.

It is a great mistake to think that clothing comes before forgiveness. God's way is the kiss first, then the clothes; and it is the father who gives the kiss and also provides the clothes. The

reason is because he wants the son in the house. The father's house is where we feed on the fatted calf. We could never enjoy the feast if we were not forgiven, neither could we if we were not clothed. It is when we know how suited we are to the Father in Christ that we can enjoy the love that has made all ours.

We can quite imagine how uncomfortable the prodigal would have been in the house with the clothes of the far country on him; but when he had the best robe, the ring, and the shoes on he would be able comfortably to enjoy the father's love in communion with him; he could feast on what the father was feasting on.

Now, that is what we Christians ought to be doing. We have every right to wear the clothes provided by the Father, and then enjoy communion with Him. When the Father tells us He delights in the Son who died for us, and by so doing glorified God, we also can say that we delight in the same blessed Person.

“Thou the prodigal hast pardoned;
Kissed us with a Father's love;
Killed the fatted calf, and called us
E'er to dwell with Thee above.”

3. WHY WAS THE PRODIGAL CLOTHED?

I want now to give three reasons why the prodigal was clothed.

1. Because he could not clothe himself. We are not told whether he tried to, but we know a very great many have. Oh, so many weave the spider's web and try to cover themselves with their works; but listen to the word of God by the prophet Isaiah. In chapter lix., verse 6, we

read, "Their webs shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works." No, they cannot cover themselves; they try, but never produce a garment. God labels the best attempt "Filthy Rags."

It was after Charlotte Edwards found out her helplessness, after repeated trying to produce a garment in this way, that God opened her eyes, and she came as a guilty sinner, and was forgiven and clothed, that she wrote:

"Just as I am, Thou wilt receive;
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
Because Thy promise I believe;
O Lamb of God, I come."

2. The second reason why he was clothed is because God required it. God cannot have sinners in His presence unless they are quite suitable to Him. The first man and all his race are not suited and never can be. The flaming sword keeps man out of Eden, but the Second Man, the Lord from heaven, is suited. The Father said of Him, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." So if we are to be suited to God the Father we must be made like Christ. The Father does this, as we have seen, by putting us in Christ, in the Best Robe. Nothing short of this will suit Him.

And now you, who have always considered that you were all right, just test your position by these truths, and find out if you are quite suited for the presence of God, because some have found out that they are clothed with the "filthy rags" of their own righteousness.

A chapel-keeper, who was very religious, once found that she had nothing but her own works

to fit her for God's presence. She was shown this by the word preached by a servant of the Lord, who came and held some Gospel Meetings. He preached first from "Fig-Leaf Aprons"; then from "Filthy Rags." She found out through God's Word that what God requires she had not got. God used it to her soul's salvation, and she never regretted that she had been stripped of her own "filthy rags," and clothed with Christ.

Dear friends, the Father must have you in Christ, clothed with the clothes that He provides.

3. The third reason why the prodigal is clothed is because the Father will have us to be at rest, comfortable, and happy. At the commencement of our meeting we referred to Isaiah lxi., verse 10, and I think it is a good verse to finish the meeting with. "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels."

I find a lot of people who want to feel happy and at rest. If you are one, get into the Father's arms first, and then let Him show you what beautiful clothes He has provided for you to wear, and by all means wear them. The Father wants you to be comfortable, so He clothes you before you get into the house.

Fellow-believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, let us rejoice together. Amen.

V.—SATISFIED AND HAPPY.

“ Bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry.” (Luke xv. 23.)

THE prodigal is made satisfied and happy. This he could not be, if he was not made it. To be satisfied and happy are results; there must be something before to cause them. This, I think, is an important thing to see, as so many souls expect to have happy feelings of satisfaction come over them in some mysterious way, with really nothing to cause them. I am quite sure a very great number of people who attend these and other gospel meetings think this; and it leads them to say, “ I’m waiting for feelings.”

Are there any here to-night who are waiting for feelings of satisfaction and happiness? If so, I impress on you the fact that you must have something to cause them. May the Lord help us now to see—

First—WHEN was the prodigal satisfied and happy?

Secondly, WHAT CAUSED his satisfaction?

Thirdly, WHAT CAUSED his happiness?

Perhaps it will help you to see how you can also be satisfied and happy.

1. WHEN WAS THE PRODIGAL SATISFIED AND HAPPY?

Go back with me, and have a look at our friend the prodigal, first, Spending all; secondly, In the mighty famine; thirdly, In want; fourthly, In the fields feeding swine and not even able to eat their food. And now ask yourself

the question, "Was he satisfied and happy?" You must answer, "No, he was not." Why? Because his circumstances, occupation, and condition caused him to be unsatisfied and unhappy. I quite think he was trying to be satisfied and happy; but trying to be will not make anyone so.

Dear friends, if you are away from God you are not satisfied and happy, and it is quite impossible for you to be so where you are, for you know as well as I do that when you think you are quite satisfied and happy it all vanishes away. Real, lasting satisfaction is a thing unknown in the "far country"; so also is true happiness.

Perhaps the feelings you have got are feelings of misery, an empty void, and no joy, but a terror at having to meet God; and, with your sins unforgiven, you tremble. These are the feelings of some of those who are in the "far country." What has caused these feelings? God has been showing you what a sinner you are. His Word says that every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God. (Romans iii. 19.) Every soul must come to this at some time; but every soul who finds it out in this world can be forgiven; but should you close your eyes to the fact now, and then have to stand before God in your sins in eternity, there will be no forgiveness, but an awful existence through the eternal ages in misery, away from God, where no happiness ever comes. Why not let God make you satisfied and happy now?

Do you say, I would like to be, I am really in earnest; I've been miserable for many weary days and weeks, and I would do anything to be different? It may be you are like a man I have read about, who was talking one evening to a

Christian, and in the course of conversation he told this Christian how miserable he was; yes, he was in deep distress about his soul. This Christian introduced him to a doctor, also a Christian, who asked him to call round to his house that evening, and have a chat on the subject of being saved.

This he agreed to do, but it was after eleven when he knocked at the doctor's door; for being a cab-driver he could not get away before. He was asked into the dining-room, and at once a good hot supper was placed before him. He began to eat, then pushing the plate from him, said, "Beg pardon, sir, but I'm that wretched I cannot eat any more. Oh, what must I do to be saved?"

Oh! that every unsaved soul here to-night were wretched, too wretched to eat or to sleep. You ought to be, for your danger is real. If you are, I have good news for you. You can be made satisfied and happy. Do you ask, When? Let us look and see when the prodigal was satisfied and happy. Let us follow him a little. He is in the field, the swine are eating ravenously; he starves; he is thinking, making plans; we see him get up, and start walking. Where is he going to? Listen! Can we not hear him say, "I will arise, and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned"? Yes, that is what he says; and he means it, too, for he is making for the road that leads to his father's house. "When he is yet a great way off" he is seen by his father, who runs towards him, and, falling on his neck, he covers him with kisses. We know the story, the kisses, the robe, the ring, the shoes; all for that naughty prodigal

son. Then the door thrown open, and he finds himself inside the house.

What then? Why, the feast is ready, and at his father's table he can eat of the fatted calf, satisfied and happy. When? When sitting at the table, forgiven, clothed, and provided for; but not till then. The result followed the cause.

Fellow-believer, can you see your history here? Happy Christian, can you see yourself at the Father's table? Yes, I know you can. I ask you, What makes you so satisfied and so happy?

You tell me, "What the Father has done for me."

My dear unsaved, miserable friend, God can make you happy; he can satisfy you with Christ as the One, and only One, who can make you satisfied and happy, and you will never be that until you know that you have access by faith into the favour of God, till you are forgiven, clothed, and eternally provided for with the richest of heaven's blessings.

2. WHAT CAUSED HIS SATISFACTION?

In Psalm xxxvi. verse 8, we are told of some who will be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of God's house, and who will be made to drink of the river of God's pleasures. Does not this help us with the answer to our question? To eat of the fatness of God's house, to drink of the river of God's pleasures, will abundantly satisfy.

Look at verse 5 in the same Psalm. "Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds." We have God's mercy and God's faithfulness in that verse.

Now verse 6: "Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; Thy judgments are a great

deep: O Lord, Thou preservest man and beast." We have God's righteousness and God's judgments in that verse; and verse 7 says, "How excellent is Thy loving-kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings."

If, on the ground of God's mercy to poor sinners, faithfulness to the dying Saviour's prayer for their forgiveness, righteousness that cannot pass the sinner by, and judgments that were poured out and exhausted when the Saviour died the awful death under the sword of justice which smote the Shepherd, His loving-kindness has reached you, a sinner, so that you put your trust under the shadow of His wings, you can surely speak of being satisfied, yea, abundantly satisfied with the blessed Saviour who endured so much on your account. The fatness of God's house is Christ; the river of God's pleasures is that stream of blessings which we have in Christ.

" Sweetest rest and peace have filled me,
Sweeter praise than tongue can tell;
God is satisfied with Jesus;
I am satisfied as well."

I went the other day to see a man in the hospital. He had been very anxious about his soul, and I had seen him before, and put the gospel before him, and he had received it in faith, and trusted in the Lord Jesus as his Saviour. I spoke to him about God's holy claims having been met by the death of Christ, and that God is satisfied with the atonement made by the Lord Jesus through His death and blood-shedding, and how He has shown His satisfaction by raising Him from the dead to His own right hand.

The dear man was very happy, and spoke very simply about believing in the Lord Jesus. He also spoke of being ignorant about the Word of God, but said he had a great desire to learn more about Christ. The world and things that used to interest him had lost their charm.

I said, "Have you found satisfaction in Christ?"

He replied, "Yes, I'm satisfied; and when you are satisfied you have enough, and don't want any more."

None but Christ can satisfy like that. Christ is the food of the newly born soul. When God's sovereign act of giving life to a dead sinner has taken place, we see desires created which can only be satisfied by Christ. Do you find these desires after God's word; a desire to be where Christ is preached; a desire to talk to those who want to talk about Him; a desire to be occupied in your thoughts with the Lamb of God Who died that cruel death to redeem your soul from hell? If so, no doubt God is at work with you.

We see these desires in the prodigal son when he spoke about the "bread enough and to spare." How much more should we expect these desires in those souls who have been forgiven, clothed, and seated at the Father's table!

My dear friends, if the fatted calf speaks about the blessed Saviour, we may be quite sure that we shall be satisfied when we feed there. Yes, abundantly satisfied, because the satisfaction is caused by the eternal Son of God, Who has died for perishing sinners, and lives to be everything to them for time and for eternity.

But there is also the drinking in that thirty-seventh Psalm, drinking at a river. That river

of God's pleasures speaks to us, does it not? Where does God find His pleasures? Why, it was of Christ He said, "In whom I am well pleased." If God is well pleased with Christ we ought to be. Let me test your heart and mine with a few questions.

What is it that gives you and me most pleasure from day to day? What pleasure do we find in reading the Bible? What pleasure do we find in thinking about the things of God and eternity?

Perhaps you say, "Oh, I don't find pleasure in that, I do it sometimes; but it is a duty, not a pleasure."

God forgive you! Another says, "We cannot be always reading our Bibles, and speaking about God's things; we must have a bit of life sometimes."

Friend, you don't know what life is. Jesus told us what eternal life is when He said, "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." (John xvii. 3.)

"Life is found alone in Jesus,
Only there 'tis offered thee,
Offered without price or money,
'Tis the gift of God sent free.
Take salvation, take salvation,
Take it now, and happy be."

I have heard of a girl who, after she was converted, was going a trip by boat. There were a good many young people among the party, and some of them got up a concert. They put this girl's name down for a solo. When called upon, she was rather taken aback; but looking to the

Lord for guidance, she started to sing that hymn one verse of which says,

“ I tried the broken cisterns, Lord,
 But ah! the waters failed,
 E'en as I stooped to drink they fled,
 And mocked me as I wailed.
 Now, none but Christ can satisfy,
 None other name for me,
 There's love and life and lasting joy,
 Lord Jesus, found in Thee.”

It made a deep, solemn impression on those that heard it. The waters are sure to fail when this world's pleasures are sought after, but the river of God's pleasures never fails. As the old fisherman said, when talking about the Lord: “ Jesus never fails, Jesus never fails.”

The question we have been considering is, “ What caused the prodigal satisfaction? We have seen that the fatted calf which was prepared at the father's table tells us of the never-failing Saviour who feeds us with Himself, and satisfies us with eternal pleasures. May God make Christ precious to us all.

3. WHAT CAUSED HIS HAPPINESS?

Our third question is, “ What caused his happiness? ”

I should like to answer it by asking another: How could he help being happy? You see he was satisfied, he could see how happy his father was; and he had been dead, and was alive again; he was lost, and is found. It is not surprising that “ they began to be merry.”

And so with you. How can you help being happy if you are truly satisfied. That cabman

that I was just now speaking about said, "I'm that wretched I cannot eat." You see he could not be happy. When unsaved and under conviction, happiness cannot be yours; but the cabman could be made happy; and so can you. He listened to the sweet story of Jesus and His love, told with all earnestness by the Christian doctor. He believed what he heard, and very soon could say, "Thank God, I see that He died for me, poor lost sinner; I believe Jesus; I see that He died for me. I trust in Him. I believe His blood has washed all my sins away. I see it clearly." And tears of joy rolled down his cheeks.

The two dropped on their knees, and the young convert poured out his heart to God, thanking Him for the salvation he had received in Christ, and praying earnestly for the salvation of his wife.

Getting off their knees he was asked to finish his supper. He started, took one mouthful, and again pushing his plate from him, said, "Beg pardon, sir, but I am that full, I could not eat another mouthful. I'll away home, and tell the wife what God has done for my soul."

He went off perfectly happy because perfectly satisfied.

Satisfaction first, happiness next with the prodigal, and with every poor sinner saved by grace, and the more satisfied with Christ we are the more happy we shall be.

But I also see that seeing his father's happiness must have caused him to be the same, and when a soul really understands how much joy there is in the heart of God when He bestows the blessing on returning sinners, it will have the same effect of producing joy too. "THEY began to be merry." The joy was mutual.

One last thought: "He was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." The new life also produces joy. Galatians v. 22 speaks of the fruit of the Spirit being "love, joy, peace, etc." It was the word "joy" as a fruit of the Spirit produced in us through the life we have as new-born souls which I think bears on our subject.

O Lord, produce in all Thine own here that joy which is the fruit of the Spirit; and, Lord Jesus, make Thyself the satisfying portion of all, that there may not be one soul here to-night who is not satisfied and happy. Lord, grant it for Thy Name's sake. Amen.
