



The Beloved of the Lamb

A Sermon preached by George Müller at Bethesda Chapel, Great George Street, Bristol, on Sunday Evening; June 6th, 1897

Revelation vii., 9-17. "AFTER this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands." At present, to all outward appearance, the number of the believers in the Lord Jesus Christ is small, in comparison with the vast number of those who do not believe in Him. But it will not always be thus; the day is coming when innumerable multitudes will be found to belong to Christ. O how precious to remember this! How deeply important to dwell on it, to seek more and more to apprehend it, to comfort ourselves by it, and to be stimulated through it to labour that we individually may be God's instruments of adding to this vast multitude! What an encouragement this for missionary labours! What an encouragement this to speak to souls about their salvation! What an encouragement, also, to seek to win the young, the middle-aged, and all classes of persons for the Lord, by Sunday schools, ragged schools, and in any way that will tend to it!

But in an especial manner it should lead us, individually, to stand before God, and to offer ourselves for missionary service, if we have not done it yet. If the Lord accept us, He will use us for the praise of His Name; if the Lord does not accept us, we have done our part, in ourselves. Still further, if we do not go out individually to heathen countries, we may yet be instrumental in glorifying God in connection with missionary labours. We can help the missionaries with the means with which God will entrust us, and we can help them by our prayers, by writing to them a word of comfort, and a word of encouragement, and in a variety of ways besides we may be instrumental in helping missionary operations. A deeply important verse is this, full of comfort, full of encouragement, full of exhortation to do what we can that we may be instruments to increase this great multitude won for the Lord.

"I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number." It is out of the power of any human being to count the vast number of the saved ones. "Which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues stood before the throne." Notice the word "stood;" that shows the attitude of a servant. All these elect holy angels stood before the throne; all these saved ones, this innumerable multitude of all nations and tribes and peoples and languages were in the attitude of servants before Jehovah. "Stood before the throne and before the Lamb." The Lamb, as you all know, whenever the expression is used, has reference to our Lord Jesus Christ, by reason of the atonement that He made. "They were clothed with white robes." White robes! This has reference to the power of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Naturally, we stand before God in filthy garments, spiritually; and these filthy garments we cannot ourselves wash and make white, so that God can be satisfied with us. We cannot give righteousness to ourselves. We have none. All our own righteousness in Scripture is compared to filthy rags. Whether we see it or not; whether we readily allow it or not, this is the statement of God: our own goodness, merit, worthiness, and righteousness are as "filthy rags."

Now these filthy rags can never enter into heaven! God cannot bear spiritual filth in heaven! All of this character must be taken away: the spiritual filth must be removed, and the only way to remove it is by the power of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, a great practical question, therefore, regarding everyone is this, "How is it with me?" We should ask ourselves, "How is it with my spiritual robes; are they white and clean?" "Am I brought into such a state as that God can receive me into heaven?" If I have not yet seen that I am a sinner; if I have not yet confessed before God that I am a sinner; if I have not yet put my trust solely in the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in His atoning blood, then I am not prepared for heaven! But I am come to this. This is not a salvation for a few chosen ones, or a few

hundreds, nor even a salvation of a few thousands; but of an innumerable multitude saved by the power of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. And as they were saved, and deserved nothing but punishment, so I (we should say to ourselves individually), even I, may be saved, if I seek salvation in God's appointed way - seeking not to obtain it by my own goodness, merit, and worthiness, but through Jesus Christ. This innumerable company, everyone of them obtained salvation through Jesus Christ, and thus may I obtain it. But in no other way.

Many persons say to themselves, "Well, it is true that it has not yet been all right with me, as it might have been and as it ought to have been; but I have tried now to turn over another leaf; I would seek now to live differently from what I have been doing, and thus I shall make up for past shortcomings, and failures, and sins." This is a soul-destroying error! We never, never, never can make up for one single sin of which we have been guilty, for if we failed in one particular only, if it were possible that we should be in such a state that we had fallen short but by one sin, that would be enough for our perdition, for we should then have broken the whole law; and as long as we trusted in ourselves for salvation, this broken law would bring destruction upon us. Therefore, we must look away from ourselves to Christ, and Him alone. God sent Him into the world in order that He not only might fulfil all the commandments which we have broken times without number, and thus work out a righteousness in which we can be accepted by God, but He also bore the punishment in our room and stead for our disobedience. We must, therefore, hide ourselves in Christ; that is, look away entirely from our own goodness, merit, and worthiness - of which we have none, none, none - and put our entire trust in the Lord Jesus.

Then, let us remember we must have "white robes," else we cannot enter into the presence of God. Our own sins, which are compared to filthy garments, must be removed, and we must solely and simply trust in the merits and sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ, and thus, by the power of His atonement, be made clean from all our sins. O how precious! Now this is my comfort, having been guilty of numberless transgressions as a young man, having also failed and come short in a variety of ways since my conversion, though not living in gross sin: yet failing in action, in word, in thought, though hating sin and loving holiness - this is my comfort, I am standing before God in white robes, clean, and spotless, as if I had never in my whole life been guilty of one single sin. And into this state I have been brought through faith in the Lord Jesus; and into this state not merely I have been brought, but all who believe in Jesus, who trust in Him alone for salvation! O how comforting is this! The dread of God, the fear of death, the fear of eternity stops completely when entering into the work of the Lord Jesus, and appropriating it to ourselves! Now see to it, beloved Christian friends, that you individually do, if you have not yet done so, derive all the comfort which God intends us to derive from this expression, "White robes." "And palms in their hands." The palm was in ancient times the sign of victory. And this innumerable multitude, everyone of them having a palm in his or her hand, declares that victory has been obtained. Victory through the blood of the Lamb. Victory through the power of Jesus Christ, Who gave it to them. Victory obtained for us individually, because He loves us with an eternal, unchangeable love, "He Who has begun a good work in us will carry it on by the power of His Spirit," and so at the last receive us to glory. O how precious this is! At present we are in spiritual conflict. Satan is not conquered yet. Satan still is our great enemy and fights against us, and often and often obtains, in some way or another, an advantage over us - if it be not in the way of leading us to an open fall, there are some words escaping us which ought not to; there are some thoughts found in us which ought not to be; and even, now and then, an action which is not altogether according to the Christ-like state in which we ought to be found. But all this will come to an end. The blessed Jesus, Who has begun a good work in us, will finish it, and we shall have individually (weak and feeble and worthless though we are in ourselves), the victory, through Jesus Christ.

Now this innumerable multitude "Cried with a loud voice, saying, ' Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.'" Notice this particularly! They ascribe salvation to God and to the Lamb; to the Father and to the Son; to Jehovah and to our Lord Jesus Christ. They do not say, "I was very prayerful; I was very conscientious; I never gave way to anything contrary to the mind of God." Nothing of the kind! The very reverse! Salvation is ascribed by everyone of the saved ones to God the Father, and to God the Son, the Lord Jesus, Who is found here under the figure of the Lamb. "They cried with a loud voice." It is especially also to be noticed that they did not merely whisper it now and then, a few times; but with a loud voice they declared it, that people might hear it, because it was the joy of their hearts to ascribe salvation to God, and to the Lord Jesus Christ, and take not the least credit to themselves. This will be the case with everyone of the saved ones. Fellow-believers, we shall all, from our inmost souls, ascribe entirely our salvation to God and to the Lord Jesus, and that we did nothing whatever, but simply, like beggars, accepted what was given to us!

"And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders, and the four beasts" - that means the four living creatures, in contradistinction to the four great worldly powers that will brood over Gentile sinners - "and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God." Notice this again, the holy, unfallen angels stood round about the throne;" stood, indicating the position of servants before the Master "stood round about the throne and about the elders," representing the Church, and the four living creatures, and fell before the throne on their faces, in deep humility of soul, ascribing salvation to God the Father and to the Lord Jesus, "and worshipped God," praising and adoring Him for what He had done for them, "Saying, Amen" - that is, "Even so is it. "Blessing" - that is, praise in the highest degree - "and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever, Amen." This expresses the deep gratitude felt on the part of the redeemed ones; and thus it will be with us. If there is a little praise and a little thanksgiving now found in our hearts, in the highest degree we shall adore, and praise, and magnify, and worship the Lord for what He has done for us in Christ Jesus. And then again, to this they set their "Amen," that is, ascribing all from their heart to God.

"And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, 'What are these which are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?' And I said unto him, 'Sir, thou knowest!'" The question was asked the apostle John as to whence these individuals came; and he confesses his ignorance. "Sir, thou knowest" - that means, in other words, "I do not know, but thou dost know it, and thou art able to tell me;" and through this confession of his ignorance he obtains the information. And this is just what we have to do before God, not to make our boast that we know everything, that we are already instructed to the very highest degree, that we cannot be instructed; but, on the contrary, to own again and again, when we read the Scriptures and find something that we do not understand, that we are ignorant of the meaning of the passage, and ask God that He would graciously be pleased to teach us. We shall find that He is ready to do it. And this instance of how even an apostle confessed his ignorance should be a particular encouragement to us to be ready on our part also to confess our ignorance; for we know that he was not only greatly honoured, but he was a believer who had been for a long time in service, in great service, who for a very long time had been an Apostle, and who was now at the close of his earthly pilgrimage, for he was about ninety years of age, but he was not ashamed to confess his ignorance. And so we should never be ashamed before God to confess our ignorance, for that is the very way to increase our knowledge. If we humble ourselves before God, He will further and further instruct us.

"'Sir, thou knowest.' And he said unto me, 'These are they which came out of great tribulation'" - more exactly, "'which came out of the great tribulation,'" having especial reference to what they had had to pass through, and bringing before us also that through which we may have yet to pass - "and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Here we have on no account to suppose that the great tribulation had made their robes white, but the blood of the Lamb; and we must never lose sight of the fact that no trials, no afflictions, make us white. They may be helpful to us, they may do us good spiritually, they ought to do us good spiritually; for on this very account, trials, sufferings, pains, sickness, afflictions, are sent to us, to be a blessing to us - but they never can make our robes white. The blood of Jesus Christ alone can accomplish this. "And have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; therefore are they before the throne." Not on account of the great tribulation are they there, but because their robes were made white by the blood of the Lamb; that is, by the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Therefore are they before the throne of God."

Now comes something else. "And serve Him day and night in His temple." "Serve Him day and night." Some persons have an idea that heaven consists in singing away our time, so that one hundred years after the other we shall be singing, and that the joys of heaven consist in doing nothing. This is a great mistake. If we work and serve the Lord a little, it is held out as a great honour, a great privilege of serving the Lord in eternity. There is one verse, particularly, pointing out this in the last chapter of the Book of Revelation, the third verse, where it is stated, "There shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him." Notice, this is held out as the greatest honour, privilege, enjoyment, and blessing - that the servants of the Living God shall serve Him; that is, have the great honour, the great privilege, bestowed upon them of serving the Lord, and just in the degree in which they have now the mind of Christ, in which they look at being allowed to serve the Lord as an honour, as a privilege, and not as a burden, not as an irksome task.

I myself, have now for many a long year, again and again and again, asked the Lord that He would yet allow me to have the great honour, the great privilege, the great enjoyment to serve Him, to labour for Him. So far from considering it a burden, an irksome task, the very reverse of this; and just in the degree in which we are happy in the Lord, so we shall look upon serving Him as a great privilege, as a particular honour, a particular enjoyment bestowed upon us.

And when you and I, as believers, shall be found at the last in this place, and in this state, and actually do serve the Lord night and day, and we shall adore and praise Him for bestowing this honour upon us to do any little thing for Him. "And He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them." God completely near, in our midst; we shall look at Him without the least particle of dread or fear, because the guilt is completely gone from the conscience, through the power of the atoning blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. O the blessedness of all this; and these are not merely simple phrases, but these statements are brought before us as realities, which hereafter will be found true in our own happy experience.

Then in the last two verses we have before us the exceedingly blessed state in which we shall be found, when the curse has been completely removed. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more." That is not literally hunger, nor literally thirst; but spiritually no longer hungering nor thirsting, having obtained to the full everything which even the renewed heart can desire. O think of the blessedness, the wondrous blessedness of all this! And yet with all these statements in Holy Writ, it is again and again found that when persons are converted, they are pitied as being very silly and foolish persons, because it is thought they have to be wretched, as if it were a miserable thing to be regenerated, to be born again. Why, the truth is there is no real happiness, and can be none, till we are brought to know

Jesus, and all of us who are believers in Christ know it from our own experience. We sought happiness in the beggarly pleasures of the world, and we sometimes even thought we had obtained it; but a little while longer and we found we had been deceiving ourselves - that no real, true happiness could be found anywhere else but in the Lord Jesus. And we know, from experience, that what we did obtain was through faith in Christ.

“They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat” – that is, the sun shall not strike them in a painful way, in an unpleasant way, as in tropical countries. While I was once on my missionary tours, going through India, I had again and again to hear from beloved missionary brethren what a trial to them was the excessive heat, this being struck by the sun. And at last, I myself knew this, from my own experience, for after I had laboured for forty weeks in Calcutta, with the heat at 110 degrees, it came to this, that I could only lie on my couch, without being able to do anything at all; and when I sought medical advice regarding it, the physician told me, “At the risk of your life you stay one day longer here; you must at once go to the hills.” Any only when I was in an atmosphere of three or four thousand feet above the sea, life returned again, as it were, and I got into a different state. All this explains what is meant here, “neither shall the sun light on them,” that is, strike on them, “nor any heat.” The curse being gone, this too, will completely go, and so in our glorified bodies we shall not have the least inconvenience regarding any of these things.

“For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” Completely near God! Completely near the Lord Jesus, in His happy presence habitually, day after day, year after year, one hundred years after the other, one thousand years after the other, one million years after the other; and unspeakably happy continually, everything that would try us removed completely, because the curse is gone. “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” This is the blessed privilege not merely of one, or of the other, such as Paul, or Peter, or James, or John, but the great privilege of the weakest, feeblest child of God now on earth, O how blessed! How unspeakably blessed is the lot of everyone who is a disciple of Jesus! Therefore, instead of allowing these persons to pity us, because we are awake spiritually, and made to come to Christ, we have rather to tell them how exceedingly happy we are, through believing in Jesus. Now are there any present who are not yet believers in the Lord? You may be looking forward to especial enjoyment at Whitsuntide, and be saying to yourselves, “O when Whitsuntide comes, how happy I shall be.” That was just the case with me when I was a boy. Whitsuntide was particularly a pleasant time, and in the little town where I was brought up there was much going on at that time. But Whitsuntide lasted only a few days! At last, however, when I was twenty years of age, I found Jesus, of Whom I had never heard as an unconverted young man, for though I had thirty tutors in the high classical school in which I was for nine years to be prepared for the University, it being the wish of my father that I should become a clergyman, yet not one of them ever spoke to me about my soul. One day, when in deep trial, infidel books were put into my hand, which I shuddered to look at and returned, but never did anyone speak to me about Jesus until I was just past twenty. Then being led into a little religious meeting, through the advice of a friend, I found Jesus. I entered this meeting as completely dead in sin as any young man could be. I left the house as a happy young disciple of the Lord Jesus, and have been a happy man ever since, now seventy-one years and seven months. Therefore, instead of our being to be pitied when brought to Jesus, if people understood what is meant by coming to Him, and trusting in Him they, themselves would be in earnest to care about their souls. But because they are ignorant as to what it means to believe on Christ, so they look on us with pity and compassion.

It is an unspeakably blessed thing, even for this life, to be a believer in Christ; but what will it be when at last we actually enter upon the glory, and become perfect in His likeness, perfectly free from sin, in every way ready, moment by moment, to glorify God, so that His Will will only have to be presented to us, and instantly we shall be ready to carry it out! That day is coming, be sure of it. It will come, and therefore should there be any present who have not as yet surrendered their heart to the Lord, O, my dear young friends, O, my dear fellow-sinners of middle age, O, my fellow-sinners greatly advanced in life, if you have not yet given your heart to the Lord, hasten to do it without a moment's longer delay.

Be in earnest! Own before God that you are a sinner, that you deserve nothing but punishment, and ask Him in pity and compassion to look upon you, and to help you to put your trust in Jesus. Thus the blessing will come, as assuredly as you really desire to obtain it. God grant that it may be so, for Jesus' sake. Amen.



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Registered Office: Müller House, 7 Cotham Park, Bristol BS6 6DA
Tel: 0117 924 5001 Email: admin@mullers.org