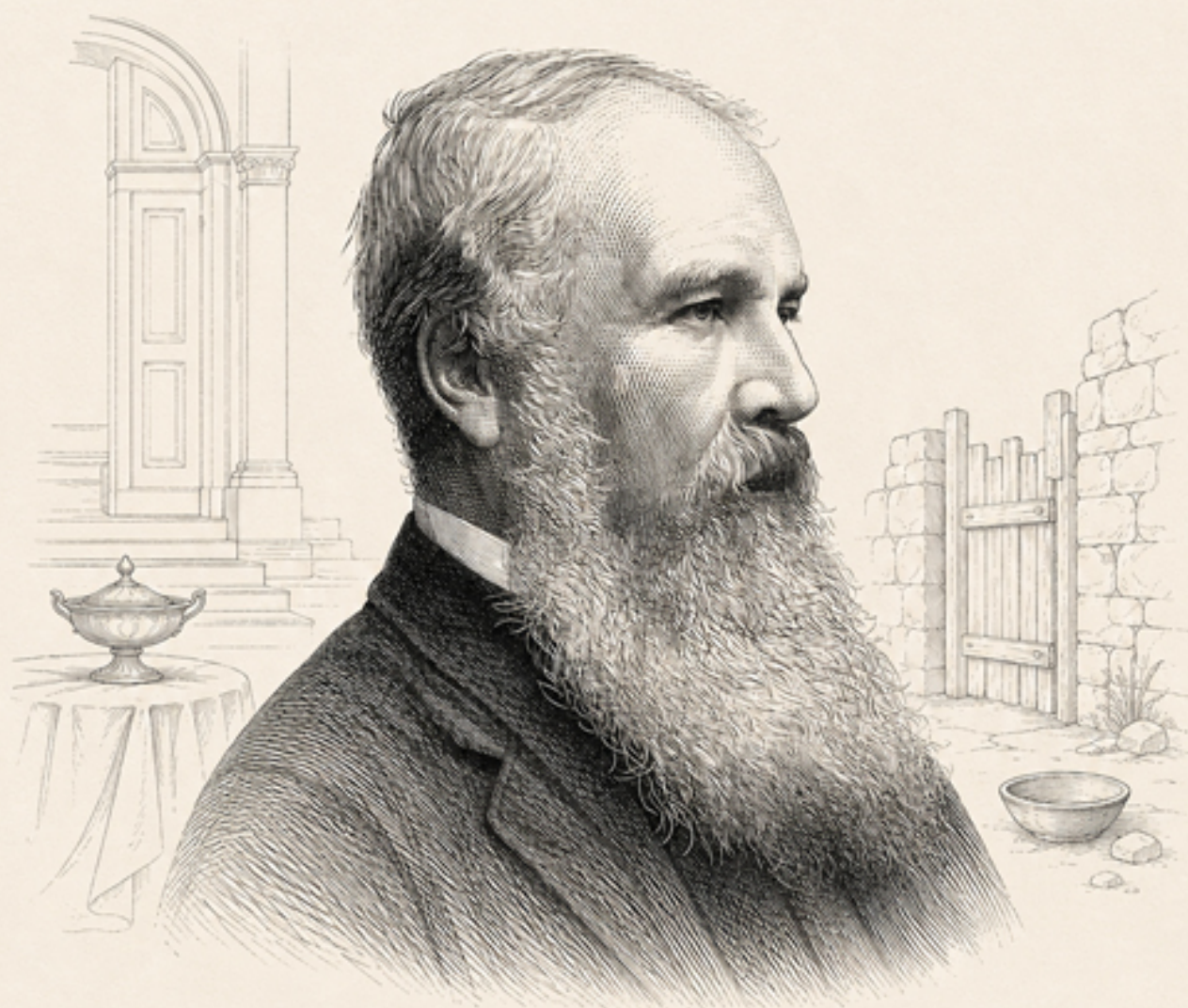


RICH AND POOR

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THOUGHTS ON LUKE 16:19-25



J. C. RYLE

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Rich and Poor

Thoughts on Luke 16:19-25

by J. C. Ryle

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Published by Monergism
www.monergism.com

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

[Introduction](#)

[I. God's Different Allotments](#)

[II. The True State of the Soul](#)

[III. Death, the Great Leveler](#)

[IV. The Believer Precious to God](#)

[V. The Soul-Ruining Sin of Selfishness](#)

[Conclusion](#)

Introduction

"There was a *rich man* who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a *beggar* named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.

The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.'

But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony!' Luke 16:19-

25

There are probably few readers of the Bible who are not familiar with the *parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus*. It is one of those passages of Scripture which leave an indelible impression on the mind. Like the parable of the Prodigal Son — once read it is never forgotten.

The reason of this is clear and simple. The whole parable is a most *vividly painted picture*. The story, as it goes on, carries our senses with it with irresistible power. Instead of *readers*, we become *lookers*. We are witnesses of all the events described. We see. We hear. We imagine we could almost touch. The rich man's banquet — the purple — the fine linen — the gate — the beggar lying by it — the sores — the dogs — the crumbs — the two deaths — the rich man's burial — the ministering angels — the bosom of Abraham — the rich man's fearful waking up — the fire — the gulf — the hopeless remorse — all, all stand out before our eyes in bold relief, and stamp themselves upon our minds. This is the perfection of language. This is the attainment of the famous Arabian standard, "He speaks the best — who turns the ear into an eye!"

But after all, it is one thing to admire the *masterly composition* of this parable, and quite another to receive the *spiritual lesson* it contains. The eye of the *intellect* can often see beauties while the *heart* remains asleep, and sees nothing at all. Hundreds read "Pilgrim's Progress" with deep interest, to whom the struggle for the celestial city is foolishness. Thousands are familiar with every word

of the parable before us this day, who never consider how it comes home to their own case. Their conscience is deaf to the cry which ought to ring in their ears as they read, "You are the man!" Their heart never turns to God with the solemn inquiry, "Lord, is this *my* picture? Lord, is it I?"

Reader, I invite you this day to consider the *leading truth* which this parable is meant to teach us. I purposely omit to notice any part of it but that which stands at the head of this paper. May the Holy Spirit give you a *teachable spirit*, and an *understanding heart*, and so produce *lasting impressions* on your soul!

I. Observe, first of all — how different are the *conditions* which God allots to different men.

The Lord Jesus begins the parable by telling us of a rich man and a beggar. He says not a word in praise either of poverty or of riches. He describes the circumstances of a wealthy man and the circumstances of a poor man; but neither condemns the temporal position of one, nor praises that of the other.

The contrast between the two men is painfully striking. Look on this picture, and on that.

Here is one who possessed *abundance of this world's good things*. "He was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day."

Here is another who *has literally nothing*. He is a friendless, diseased, half-starved pauper. "He lies at the rich man's gate full of sores," and begs for crumbs.

Both are children of Adam. Both came from the same dust, and belong to one family. Both are living in the same land and subjects of the same government. And yet how different is their condition!

We must take heed that we do not draw lessons from the parable which it was never meant to teach. The *rich* are not always evil men, and do not always go to Hell. The *poor* are not always holy men, and do not always go to Heaven. We must not rush into the *extreme* of *supposing that it is sinful to be rich*. We must not run away with the idea that there is anything wicked in the difference of condition here described, and that *God intended all men to be equal*. There is nothing in our Lord Jesus Christ's words to warrant any such conclusion. He simply describes things as they are often seen in the world, and as we must expect to see them.

Many in every age have disturbed society by *stirring up the poor* against the rich. But so long as the world is under the present order of things, *universal equality* cannot be attained.

So long as . . .

some are wise, and some are foolish;

some are strong, and some are weak;

some are healthy, and some are diseased;

so long as children reap the fruit of their parent's misconduct;

so long as sun, and rain, and heat, and cold, and wind, and waves, and drought, and blight, and storm, and tempest are beyond man's control—so long will there be *inequality* in this world.

Take all the property in England by force this day, and divide it equally among the inhabitants. Give every man over twenty years old

an *equal portion*. Let all share alike, and begin the world over again. Do this, and see where you would be at the end of fifty years. You would just have come round to the point where you began! You would just find things as *unequal* as before!

Some would have worked—and some would have been idle;
some would have been always careless—and some always scheming;
some would have sold—and others would have bought;
some would have wasted—and others would have saved.
And the end would be, that some would be *rich*—and others *poor*.

We might as well say . . .
that all men ought to be of the same height, weight, strength, and cleverness;
or that all oak trees ought to be of the same shape and size;
or that all blades of grass ought to be of the same length
—as that all men were meant to be equal.

Settle it in your mind that the main cause of all the suffering you see around you, is sin. Sin is the grand cause . . .
of the enormous luxury of the rich—and the painful degradation of the poor;
of the heartless selfishness of the highest classes—and the helpless poverty of the lowest.

Sin must be first cast out of the world;
the hearts of all men must be renewed and sanctified;
the devil must be bound;
the Prince of Peace must come down and take His great power and

reign

—all this must be before there ever can be universal happiness, or the gulf be filled up which now divides the rich and poor.

Beware of expecting a millennium to be brought about . . .
by any method of government,
by any system of education,
or by any political party.

Labor to do good to all men; pity your poorer brethren, and help every reasonable endeavor to raise them from their low estate; do not slacken your hand from any endeavor to increase knowledge—to promote morality—to improve the temporal condition of the poor.

But never, never forget that you live in a fallen world—that sin is all around you—and that the devil is abroad.

And be very sure that the rich man and Lazarus are *emblems of two classes of people which will always be in the world until the Lord comes!*

II. Observe, in the next place — that a man's temporal condition is no test to the state of his soul.

"There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day." The **rich man** in the parable appears to have been the world's pattern of a prosperous man. If the *present* life were all — he seems to have had everything that heart could wish.

We know that he was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day — we need not doubt that he had everything else which money could procure. The wisest of men had good cause for saying, "Money answers all things;" "The rich has many friends" (Eccles. 10:19; Proverbs 14:20).

But who that reads the story through to the end, can fail to see that in the highest and best sense — the rich man was pitiably poor? Take away the good things of *this* life, and he had nothing left — nothing after death, nothing beyond the grave, nothing in the world to come. With all his riches — he had no *treasure laid up in Heaven*. With all his purple and fine linen — he had no 'garment of righteousness'. With all his admiring companions — he had no Friend and Advocate at God's right hand. With all his sumptuous fare — he had never tasted the bread of life. With all his splendid palace — he had no home in the eternal world. Without God, without Christ, without faith, without grace, without pardon, without holiness — he lives to himself for a few short years, and then goes down hopelessly into the pit of Hell! How hollow and unreal was all his prosperity! Reader, judge what I say — *The rich man was very poor!*

"At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores." **Lazarus** appears to have been one who had literally nothing in this world. It is hard to conceive a case of greater misery and destitution than his. He had neither house, nor money, nor food, nor health, nor, in all probability, even clothes. His picture is one that can never be forgotten. He lay at the rich man's gate, covered with sores; he desired to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table; moreover, the dogs

came and licked his sores. Truly the wise man might well say, "The poor is hated even of his neighbor." "The destruction of the poor is their poverty." (Proverbs 14:20; 10:15).

But who that reads the parable to the end, can fail to see that in the highest sense Lazarus was not poor — but rich? He was a child of God. He was an heir of glory. He possessed durable riches and righteousness. His name was in the book of life. His place was prepared for him in Heaven. He had the best of clothing — the righteousness of a Savior. He had the best of friends — God Himself was his portion. He had the best of food — he had food to eat which the world knew nothing of. And, best of all, he had these things *forever!* They supported him in life — they did not leave him in the hour of death. They went with him beyond the grave — they were his to eternity. Surely in this point of view, we may well say, not "poor Lazarus," but "rich Lazarus!"

Reader, you would do well to measure all men by God's standard — to measure them not by the amount of their income — but by the condition of their souls. When the Lord God looks down from Heaven upon men, He takes no account of many things which are highly esteemed by the world. He looks not at men's money, or lands, or titles. He looks only at the state of their souls — and reckons them accordingly. Oh, that you would strive to do likewise! Oh, that you would value *grace* above titles, or intellect, or gold! Often, far too often, the only question asked about a man is, "How much is he worth?" It would be well for us all to remember that every man is pitiably poor — until he is rich in faith, and rich toward God.

As astonishing as it may seem to some — all the money in the world is worthless in God's balances, compared to grace! As hard as the saying may sound — I believe that a converted beggar is far more important and honorable in the sight of God — than an unconverted king. The king may glitter like the butterfly in the sun for a little season, and be admired by an ignorant world — but his latter end is darkness, and misery forever! The beggar may crawl through the world like a crushed worm, and be despised by every one who sees him — but his latter end is a glorious resurrection and a blessed eternity with Christ! Of him the Lord says, "I know your poverty — but you are rich!" (Rev. 2:9).

King Ahab was *ruler* over the ten tribes of Israel. Obadiah was nothing more than a *servant* in his household. Yet who can doubt which was most precious in God's sight — the servant or the king?

Ridley and Latimer were deposed from all their dignities, cast into prison as malefactors, and at length burned at the stake. Bonner and Gardiner, their persecutors, were raised to the highest pitch of ecclesiastical greatness, enjoyed large incomes, and died unmolested in their beds. Yet who can doubt which of the two parties was on the Lord's side?

Richard Baxter, the famous divine, was persecuted with savage malignity, and condemned to a long imprisonment by a most unjust judgment. Jeffreys, the Lord Chief Justice, was a man of infamous character, without either morality or religion. Baxter was sent to jail — and Jeffreys was loaded with honors. Yet who can doubt who was the good man of the two, the Lord Chief Justice — or the author of "The Saint's Everlasting Rest?"

Reader, be very sure that riches and worldly greatness are no certain marks of God's favor. They are often, on the contrary — a snare and hindrance to a man's soul. They make him love the world and forget God. What says Solomon? "Labor not to be rich!" (Proverbs 23:4). What says Paul? "Those who will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition" (1 Tim. 6:9).

Reader, be no less sure that *poverty* and *afflictions* are no certain proof of God's displeasure. They are *blessings in disguise!* They are always sent in divine *love* and *wisdom*. They often serve to wean man from the world; they teach him to set his affections on things above. They often show the sinner his own heart: they often make the saint fruitful in good works. What says the book of Job? "Happy is the man whom God corrects; therefore despise not the chastening of the Almighty" (Job 5:17). What says Paul? "Whom the Lord loves — He chastens" (Hebrews 12:6).

One great secret of happiness in this life is to be of a patient, contented spirit. Strive daily to realize the truth that this present life is not the place of reward. The time of retribution and recompense is yet to come! Do not judge anything hastily before that time. Remember the words of the wise man: "If you see the poor oppressed in a district, and justice and rights denied — do not be surprised at such things." (Eccles. 5:8). Yes, there is a day of judgment yet to come! That day shall put all in their right places. At last, a *mighty difference* there shall be seen between him who fears God — and him who does not fear God. The children of Lazarus and the children of the rich man, shall at length be seen in their true colors — and everyone shall receive according to his works.

III. Observe, in the next place — how all classes alike come to the *grave*.

"The time came when the *beggar* died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The *rich man* also died and was buried." Luke 16:22

Lazarus died — and the rich man also died. As different and divided as they were in their lives — they had both to *drink of the same cup* at the last. Both went to the house appointed for all living. Both went to that place where rich and poor meet together. Dust they were — and unto dust they returned.

This is the lot of all men. It will be our own, unless the Lord shall first return in glory. After all our scheming, and contriving, and planning, and studying — after all our inventions, and discoveries, and scientific attainments — there remains one *enemy* we cannot conquer and disarm — and that is Death! The chapter in Genesis, which records the long lives of Methuselah, and the rest who lived before the flood, winds up the simple story of each by two expressive words, "He died." And now, after thousands of years, what more can be said of the greatest among ourselves? The histories of Marlborough, and Washington, and Napoleon, and Wellington arrive at the same humbling conclusion. The end of each, after all his greatness, is just this, "He died."

Death is a mighty leveler! He spares none, he waits for none! He will not tarry until you are ready. He will not be kept out by doors, and bars, and bolts. The Englishman boasts that his home is his castle — but, with all his boasting, he cannot exclude death. An Austrian nobleman forbade death and the smallpox to be named in his

presence. But named or not named, it matters little — in God's appointed hour, death will come!

One man rolls lazily along the road in the smoothest and handsomest carriage which money can procure; another toils wearily along the path on foot — yet both are sure to meet at last in the same home!

One man, like Absalom, has fifty servants to wait upon him and do his bidding; another has none to lift a finger to do him a service — but both are traveling to a place where they must lie down alone.

One man is the owner of millions; another has scarcely a dollar that he can call his own property — yet neither one nor the other can carry one penny with him into the unseen world.

One man is the possessor of half a county; another has not so much as an inch of land — and yet 'six feet' of dirt will be amply sufficient for either of them at the last.

One man pampers his body with every possible delicacy, and clothes it in the richest and softest apparel; another has scarcely enough to eat, and seldom enough to put on — yet both alike are hurrying on to a day when "ashes to ashes, and dust to dust," shall be proclaimed over them! Fifty years hence, none shall be able to say, "This was the *rich* man's bone — and this the bone of the *poor* man."

Reader, I know that these are ancient things. I do not deny it for a moment. I am writing stale old things that all men *know* — but I am also writing things that all men do not *feel*. Oh, no! if they did feel them, they would not speak and live as they do.

You wonder sometimes at the tone and language of ministers of the Gospel. You marvel that we press upon you immediate decision. You think us extreme and extravagant in our views, because we urge upon you to close with Christ — to leave nothing uncertain — to make sure that you are born again and ready for Heaven. You hear — but do not approve. You go away, and say to one another, "The man means well — but he goes too far."

But do you not see, that the reality of death is continually forbidding us to use other language? We see him gradually thinning our congregations; we miss face after face in our assemblies; we know not whose turn may come next! We only know as the tree falls — there it will lie, and that "after death comes the judgment!" We must be bold and decided, and uncompromising in our language. We would rather run the risk of offending some than of losing any. We would aim at the standard set up by old Baxter "I'll preach as though I never would preach again! I preach as a *dying man* to dying men!"

We would realize the character given by Charles II of one of his preachers: "That man preaches as though death was behind his back! When I hear him, I cannot go to sleep."

Oh, that men would learn to live — as those who must one day die! Truly it is poor work to set our affections on a dying world and its short-lived comforts, and for the sake of an inch of time to lose a glorious immortality! Here we are toiling, and laboring, and wearying ourselves about *trifles*, and running to and fro like ants upon a heap — and yet after a few years we shall all be gone, and another generation will fill our place. Live for eternity, reader! Seek a portion which can never be taken from you; and never forget John

Bunyan's golden rule: "He who would live well — let him make his dying day his company-keeper."

IV. Observe, in the next place — how precious a believer's soul is in the sight of God.

The rich man, in the parable, dies and is buried. Perhaps he had a splendid funeral — a funeral proportioned to his expenditure while he was yet alive. But we hear nothing further of the moment when soul and body were divided. The next thing we hear of, is that he is in Hell.

The poor man, in the parable, dies also. What kind of burial he had, we know not. A *pauper's funeral* is a melancholy business! But this we do know, that the moment Lazarus dies — he is carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom — carried to a place of rest, where all the *faithful* are waiting for the 'resurrection of the just'.

Reader, there is something to my mind very striking, very touching, and very comforting in this expression of the parable. I ask your especial attention to it. It throws great light on the relation of all sinners who *believe* in Christ to their God and Father. It shows a little of the care bestowed on the least and lowest of Christ's disciples by the King of kings.

No man has such friends and attendants as the believer, however little he may think it. *Angels* rejoice over him in the day that he is born again of the Spirit; angels minister to him all through life; angels encamp around him in the wilderness of this world; angels take charge of his soul in death, and bear it safely home. Yes, as vile as he may be in his own eyes, and lowly in his own sight — the very

poorest and humblest believer in Jesus is cared for by his Father in Heaven with a care that surpasses knowledge! The Lord has become his Shepherd — and he can lack nothing really good. Only let a man come sincerely to Christ — and he shall have all the benefits of a covenant ordered in all things and sure.

Is he laden with many sins? Though they be as scarlet — they shall be as white as snow!

Is his heart hard and prone to evil? A new heart shall be given to him, and a new spirit put in him!

Is he weak and cowardly? He who enabled Peter to confess Christ before his enemies, shall make him bold!

Is he ignorant? He who bore with Thomas' slowness, shall bear with him, and guide him into all truth!

Is he alone in his position? He who stood by Paul when all men forsook him, shall also stand by his side!

Is he in circumstances of special trial? He who enabled men to be saints in Nero's household, shall also enable him to persevere!

The very hairs of his head are all numbered. Nothing can harm him without God's permission. He who hurts him — hurts the apple of God's eye, and injures a brother and member of Christ Himself!

His *trials* are all wisely ordered. Satan can only vex him as he did Job — when God permits him. No temptation can happen to him, above what he is able to bear. All things are working together for his good!

His steps are all ordered — from grace to glory. He is kept on earth until he is ripe for Heaven — and not one moment longer. The *harvest* of the Lord must have its appointed proportion of sun and wind, of cold and heat, of rain and storm — and then, when the believer's work is done, the angels of God shall come for him as they did for Lazarus, and carry him safely home!

Ah, reader, the men of the world little think whom they are *despising*, when they mock Christ's people! They are mocking those whom angels are not ashamed to attend upon. They are mocking the brethren and sisters of Christ Himself! Little do they consider that these are those for whose sakes the days of tribulation are shortened: these are those by whose intercession kings reign peacefully. Little do they reckon that the prayers of men like Lazarus have more weight in the affairs of nations, than hosts of armed men.

Believers in Christ who read these pages, you little know the full extent of your privileges and possessions. Like *children* at school — you know not half of what your Father is doing for your welfare. Learn to live by *faith* more than you have done. Acquaint yourself with the fullness of the treasure laid up for you in Christ even now. This world, no doubt, must always be a place of *trial* while we are in the body; but still there are *comforts* provided for the *brethren of Lazarus* which many never enjoy.

V. Observe, in the last place — what a dangerous and soul-ruining sin is the sin of *selfishness*.

You have the *rich* man in the parable, in a *hopeless* state. If there was no other picture of a lost soul in Hell in all the Bible — you have it here. You meet him in the *beginning* — clothed in purple and fine

linen; you part with him at the *last* — tormented in the everlasting fire!

And yet there is nothing to show that this man was a murderer, or a thief, or an adulterer, or a liar. There is no reason to say that he was an atheist, or an infidel, or a blasphemer. For anything we know — he faithfully attended to all the ordinances of the Jewish religion. But we do know that he was lost forever.

There is something to my mind very solemn in this thought. Here is a man whose outward life in all probability was correct — at all events, we know nothing against him. He dresses richly — but then he had money to spend on his apparel. He gives splendid feasts and entertainments — but then he was wealthy, and could well afford it. We read nothing recorded against him that might not be recorded of hundreds and thousands in the present day — who are counted respectable and good sort of people. And yet the *end* of this man, is that he goes to Hell. Surely this deserves serious attention!

I believe it is meant to teach us to ***beware of living only for ourselves***. It is not enough that we are able to say, "I live correctly. I pay every one his due. I discharge all the relations of life with propriety. I attend to all the outward requirements of Christianity." There remains behind another question, to which the Bible requires an answer: "To whom do you live — to yourself or to Christ? What is the great end, aim, object, and ruling motive in your life?" Let men call the question extreme if they please. For myself, I can find nothing short of this in Paul's words, "He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves — but unto Him who died for them, and rose again" (2 Corinthians 5:15). And I draw the

conclusion that if, like the rich man, we live only to ourselves — we shall ruin our souls forever!

I believe further that this passage is meant to teach us ***the damnable nature of sins of omission***. It does not seem that it was so much the things the rich man *did* — but the things he left *undone*, which made him miss Heaven. Lazarus was at his gate — and he merely let him alone. But is not this exactly in keeping with the history of the judgment in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew? Nothing is said there of the sins of *commission* of which the lost are guilty. How does the *charge* run?

"For I was *hungry* — and you gave Me nothing to eat;
I was *thirsty* — and you gave Me nothing to drink;
I was a *stranger* — and you did not take Me in;
I was *naked* — and you did not clothe Me,
I was *sick* and in *prison* — and you did not take care of Me!"
(Matthew 25:42, 43).

The charge against them is simply that they *did not do* certain things. On this their *sentence* turns. And I draw the conclusion again, that except we take heed, *sins of omission* may ruin our souls! Truly it was a solemn saying of good old Usher, on his death-bed: "Lord, forgive me all my sins — but specially my sins of *omission*."

I believe further, that the passage is meant to teach us that ***riches bring special danger with them***. Yes! riches, which the vast majority of men are always seeking after — riches for which they spend their lives, and of which they make an idol — riches entail on their possessor immense spiritual peril! The possession of them has a very *hardening effect* on the soul — they chill; they freeze; they

petrify the inward man! They close the eye to the things of faith. They insensibly produce a tendency to *forget God*.

And does not this stand in perfect harmony with all the language of Scripture on the same subject?

What does *our Lord* say? "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle — than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God!" Mark 10:23-25 !" (Mark 10:23, 25).

What does *Paul* say? "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs!" (1 Tim. 6:10).

What can be more striking than the fact that the Bible has frequently spoken of *money* as a most fruitful cause of sin and evil?

For money, *Achan* brought defeat on the armies of Israel, and death on himself.

For money, *Balaam* sinned against light, and tried to curse God's people.

For money, *Delilah* betrayed Samson to the Philistines.

For money, *Gehazi* lied to Naaman and Elisha, and became a leper.

For money, *Ananias* and *Sapphira* became the first hypocrites in the early Church, and lost their lives.

For money, *Judas Iscariot* sold Christ, and was ruined eternally.

Surely these facts speak loudly!

Money, in truth is one of the most unsatisfying of possessions. It takes away some cares, no doubt — but it brings with it quite as many cares as it takes away!

There is trouble in the getting of it;
there is anxiety in the keeping of it;
there are temptations in the use of it;
there is guilt in the abuse of it;
there is sorrow in the losing of it;
there is perplexity in the disposing of it.

Two-thirds of all the strifes, quarrels, and lawsuits in the world, arise from one simple cause — money!

Money most certainly is one of the most heart-ensnaring of possessions. It seems *desirable* at a distance — yet it often proves a *poison* when in our hand! No man can possibly tell the effect of money on his soul, if it suddenly falls to his lot to possess it. Many a one *did* run well — as a *poor man* who forgets God when he becomes rich.

Reader, I draw the conclusion that those who have money, like the rich man in the parable, ought to take double pains about their souls. They live in a most unhealthy atmosphere — they have double need to be on their guard!

I believe, not least, that the passage is meant to stir up ***special carefulness about selfishness*** in these last days. You have a special warning in 2 Timothy 3:1-2; "In the last days perilous times shall come: for men shall be *lovers of their own selves*, covetous." I believe we have come to the last days, and that we ought to beware of the sins here mentioned, if we love our souls.

Perhaps we are poor judges of our own times: we are apt to exaggerate and magnify their evils, just because we see and feel

them; but after every allowance, I doubt whether there ever was more need of warnings against *selfishness* than in the present day. I am sure there never was a time when all classes in England had so many *comforts* and so many *temporal* good things; and yet I believe there is an utter disproportion between men's expenditure on *themselves* — and their outlay on works of *charity* and works of *mercy*. I see this in the miserable donations to which many rich men confine their charity. I see it in the languishing condition of many of our best Christian societies, and the painfully slow growth of their annual incomes. I see it in the small number of names which appear in the list of contributions to any good work. There are, I believe, thousands of rich people in this country, who literally give away nothing at all. I see it in the notorious fact that few, even of those who give — give anything *proportioned* to their means. I see all this, and mourn over it! I regard it as the *selfishness* and *covetousness* predicted as likely to arise in the last days.

Readers, I know that this is a *painful* and *delicate* subject. But it must not on that account, be avoided by the minister of Christ. It is a subject for the times, and it needs pressing home. I desire to speak to myself, and to all who make any profession of religion. Of course I cannot expect worldly and utterly ungodly people to view this subject in Bible light — to them the Bible is no rule of faith and practice; to quote texts to them would be of little use.

But I do ask all *professing Christians* to consider well what Scripture says against *covetousness* and *selfishness*, and on behalf of *liberality* in giving money.

Is it for nothing that the *Lord Jesus* spoke the parable of the *Rich Fool*, and blamed him because he was not "rich towards God?" (Luke 12:21). Is it for nothing that in the parable of the *Sower*, He mentions the deceitfulness of riches as one reason why the seed of the Word bears no fruit? (Matthew 13:22.) Is it for nothing that He says, "I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings." (Luke 16:9.) Is it for nothing that He says, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." (Luke 14:12-14.) Is it for nothing that He says, "Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in Heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys." (Luke 12:33.) Is it for nothing that He says, "It is more blessed to give than to receive?" (Acts 20:35). Is it for nothing that He warns us against the example of the priest and Levite, who saw the wounded traveler — but passed by on the other side? Is it for nothing that He praises the *good Samaritan*, who denied himself to show kindness to a stranger? (Luke 10:34.)

Is it for nothing that *Paul* classes covetousness with sins of the grossest description, and denounces it as idolatry? (Coloss. 3:5.) And is there not a striking and painful difference between this language and the habits and feeling of society about money? I appeal to any one who knows the world. Let him judge what I say.

Reader, I only ask you to consider calmly the passages of Scripture to which I have referred. I cannot think they were meant to teach nothing at all. That the habits of the East and our own are different, I freely allow; that some of the expressions I have quoted are *figurative* I freely admit; but still, after all, *a principle lies at the bottom of all these expressions*. Let us take heed that this principle is not neglected. I wish that many a professing Christian in this day, who perhaps dislikes what I am saying, would try to write a *commentary* on these expressions, and try to explain to himself what they mean!

To know that alms-giving cannot atone for sin, is well. To know that our good works cannot justify us, is excellent. To know that we may give all our goods to feed the poor, and build hospitals and cathedrals, without any real charity, is most important. But let us beware lest we go into the other extreme, and because our money cannot *save* us — give away no money at all.

Has anyone who reads these pages **money**? Then take heed and beware of covetousness! Remember you carry *weight* in the *race towards Heaven*. All men are naturally in danger of being lost forever; but you are doubly so, because of your possessions. Nothing is said to put out fire so soon — as *earth* thrown upon it; and nothing, I am sure, has such a tendency to quench the fire of religion — as the possession of money. It was a solemn message which Buchanan, on his death-bed, sent to his old pupil: "He was going to a place where *few* kings and great men would come."

It is possible, no doubt, for you to be saved as well as others. With God, nothing is impossible. Abraham, Job, and David were all rich —

and yet saved. But oh, take heed to yourself! Money is a *good servant* — but a *bad master*. Let that saying of our Lord's sink down into your heart: "I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of Heaven!"

Well said an old divine: "The surface above gold mines is generally very barren." Well might old Latimer begin one of his sermons before Edward VI by quoting three times over our Lord's words: "Take heed and beware of covetousness!" And then saying, "What if I should say nothing else these three or four hours?" There are few prayers more wise and more necessary than that petition: "In all time of our wealth, good Lord deliver us!"

Has anyone who reads these pages **little** or no money? Then do not *envy* those who are richer than yourself? *Pray* for them. *Pity* them. Be charitable to their faults. Remember that *high* places are *giddy* places, and be not too hasty in your condemnation of their conduct. Perhaps if you had *their difficulties* — you would do no better yourself. Beware of the *love* of money! A man may love money overmuch, without having any at all. Beware of the love of *self* — it may be found in a poor cottage as well as in a palace. And beware of thinking that poverty alone will save you! If you would sit with Lazarus in glory — you must not only have fellowship with him in suffering — but in *grace*.

Does any reader desire to know the **remedy** against that *love of self*, which ruined the rich man's soul, and cleaves to us all by nature, like our skin! I tell him plainly there is *only one* remedy, and I ask him to mark well what that remedy is. It is not the fear of Hell. It is not the hope of Heaven. It is not any sense of duty. Oh, no! The *disease of*

selfishness is far too deeply rooted to yield to such secondary motives as these. Nothing will ever cure it, but an experimental knowledge of Christ's redeeming love! You must know the misery and guilt of your own estate by nature; you must experience the power of Christ's atoning blood sprinkled upon your conscience, and making you whole; you must taste the sweetness of peace with God through the mediation of Jesus, and feel the love of a reconciled Father shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Spirit.

Then, and not until then, the *mainspring of selfishness* will be broken! Then, knowing the immensity of your debt to Christ, you will feel that nothing is too great and too costly to give to Him. Feeling that you have been loved much, when you deserved nothing — you will heartily love in return, and cry, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits?" Feeling that you have freely received countless mercies, you will think it a privilege to do anything to please Him to Whom you owe all. Feeling that you have been bought with a price, and are no longer your own — you will labor to glorify God with body and spirit, which are His.

Yes, reader, I repeat it this day! I know no *effectual remedy for the love of self* — but a believing apprehension of the love of Christ. Other remedies may *palliate* the disease — this alone will heal it. Other antidotes may hide its deformity — this alone will work a perfect cure.

An easy, good-natured temper may cover over selfishness in one man; a love of praise may conceal it in a second; a self-righteous asceticism and an affected spirit of self-denial, may keep it out of sight in a third; but nothing will ever cut up selfishness by the roots

— but the love of Christ revealed in the mind by the Holy Spirit, and felt in the heart by simple faith. Once let a man see the full meaning of the words, "Christ *loved* me and *gave* Himself for me!" and then he will delight to give himself to Christ, and all that he has to His service. He will live to Him, not in order that he may *be* saved — but because he *is* saved already. He will work for Him, not that he may have life and peace — but because life and peace are his already.

Go to the *cross of Christ* — all you who want to be delivered from the *power of selfishness*. Go and see what a *price* was paid there to provide a ransom for *your* soul. Go and see what an astounding *sacrifice* was there made that a *door to eternal life* might be provided for poor sinners like you. Go and see how the Son of God gave Himself for you — and learn to think it a small thing to give yourself to Him.

Reader, the *disease* which ruined the rich man in the parable, may be cured. But oh, remember, there is only one real remedy! If you would not live to yourself — you must live to Christ. See to it that this remedy is not only *known* — but *applied*; not only *heard* of — but *used*.

Conclusion

1. And now let me conclude, all by urging on every reader of these pages the great duty of self-examination.

A passage of Scripture like this parable ought surely to raise in many an one great searchings of heart. "What am I? Where am I going? What am I doing? What is likely to be my condition after death? Am

I prepared to leave the world? Have I any *home* to look forward to in the world to come. Have I put off the old man and put on the new? Am I really one with Christ, and a pardoned soul?" Surely such questions as these, may well be asked when the story of the rich man and Lazarus has been heard. Oh, that the Holy Spirit may incline many a reader's heart to ask them!

2. In the next place, I invite all readers who desire to have their souls saved, and have no good account to give of themselves at present — to seek salvation while it can be found. I do entreat you to apply to Him, by Whom alone man can enter Heaven and be saved, even Jesus Christ the Lord. He has the *keys* of Heaven. He is sealed and appointed by God the Father to be the Savior of all who will come to Him. Go to Him in earnest and hearty prayer, and tell Him your case. Tell Him that you have heard that He receives sinners — and that you come to Him as such. Tell Him that you desire to be saved by Him in His Own way — and ask Him to save you. Oh that you may take this course without delay! Remember the hopeless end of the rich man. Once dead — there is no more opportunity to be saved.

3. Last of all, I entreat all professing Christians to encourage themselves in habits of liberality towards causes of charity and mercy. Remember that you are *God's stewards* — and give money liberally, freely, and without grudging, whenever you have an opportunity. You cannot keep your money forever. You must give account one day of the manner in which it has been expended. Oh, lay it out with an *eye to eternity*, while you can!

I do not ask rich men to leave their situations in life and go into the workhouse. I ask no man to neglect his worldly calling, and to omit to provide for his family. *Diligence in business* is a positive Christian duty; provision for those dependent on us, is proper Christian prudence. But I ask all to look around continually as they journey on, and to remember the poor — the poor in *body* and the poor in *soul*.

We are here for a few short years. How can we do most good with our money while we are here? How can we so spend it as to leave the world somewhat *happier* and somewhat *holier* when we are gone? Might we not abridge some of our *luxuries*? Might we not lay out less upon *ourselves* — and give more to Christ's cause and Christ's poor? Is there none we can do good to? Are there no sick, no poor, no needy — whose sorrows we might lessen, and whose comforts we might increase? Such questions will never fail to elicit an answer from some quarter. I am thoroughly persuaded that the income of every Christian and charitable society in England might easily be multiplied tenfold, if English Christians would give in *proportion* to their means.

There are none, surely, to whom such appeals ought to come home with such power — as professing believers in the Lord Jesus. The parable of the text is a striking illustration of our *position* by nature, and our *debt* to Christ. We all lay, like Lazarus at Heaven's gate, sick unto the death, helpless, and starving. Blessed be God, we were not *neglected* as he was! Jesus came forth to relieve us. Jesus gave Himself for us — that we might have hope and live. For a *poor Lazarus-like world* — He came down from Heaven, and humbled Himself to become a man. For a poor Lazarus-like world — He went

up and down doing good, caring for men's bodies as well as souls, until He died for us on the cross!

I believe that in giving to support works of charity and mercy, we are doing that which is according to Christ's mind — and I ask readers of these pages to *begin* the habit of giving, if they never began it before; and to go on with it increasingly, if they have begun.

I believe that in offering a *warning against covetousness*, I have done no more than bring forward a warning specially called for by the times, and I ask God to bless the consideration of these pages to many souls!