

Compensation in Life

by J.R. Miller

The sermon emphasizes the law of compensation in life, illustrating how every hardship has a corresponding blessing or advantage.

Scripture: Psalm 30:5, Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, Isaiah 61:3, Matthew 5:4, Romans 8:28, 2 Corinthians 4:17, 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, Philippians 4:11-13, James 1:2-4, 1 Peter 5:10

Topics: "Divine Providence", "Compensation in Life"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes the principle of compensation in life, illustrating how every hardship has a corresponding benefit, and every loss can lead to a gain. He encourages listeners to recognize the balance in God's providence, where challenges often bring about growth, strength, and deeper appreciation for life's blessings. Miller points out that our perspective greatly influences how we perceive our circumstances, urging us to find beauty even in trials. He reassures that divine wisdom governs our experiences, ensuring that every ill carries a compensating good. Ultimately, he calls for contentment and faith in the belief that all things work together for good for those who love God.

Transcript

Every shadow--has its light;

every night--has its morning;

every pang of pain--has its thrill of pleasure;

every salt tear--has its crystal beauty;

every weakness--has its element of strength;

every loss--has its gain.

So all through life, these balancings run.

He is not a thoughtful or reverent observer, who has not been struck by this wonderful system of compensations found in all God's providences. Wherever we turn we can see it--if only we have eyes to see. It may be traced even in nature. Every hill or mountain--has its corresponding valley. The disadvantages of any particular place--are balanced by advantages of some kind. Asher's portion was

hilly--but in the rugged hills there were minerals; the paths were rough and steep--but there was iron at hand with which to prepare shoes for the hard climbing. Marah's waters were bitter and unfit to drink--but close beside the fountain, grew the tree to sweeten them.

Summer's heat is hard to endure--but it woos from the earth ten thousand lovely beauties of verdure, foliage, flower and harvest. Autumn comes with its fading leaves, its perishing flowers, its dying life and its sadness--but it is the season of purple vintage, mellowing fruits and falling nuts, while the foliage in its very decay, surpasses the glory of its freshest greenness. Winter has its short days, its snows and its piercing colds--but it brings its long nights, its social cheer, its crystal beauty, its merry sports, while beneath its fleecy blankets the roots of trees, grasses, grains and flowers are nourished. Spring has its rains, its melting snows, its cloudy skies, its impassable country-roads--but it has also its bursting buds, its return of birds, its warm breathings and all its prophecies of life and beauty.

In human life also, we find the same law of compensation. Men's lots are not so unlike, as we oftentimes think them to be. Every ill has somewhere a good to balance it; and every envied portion has something in it which detracts from its enjoyment.

It makes a great difference from what point of view, we look at life's experiences and circumstances. From one outlook only the attractive features are seen, while the drawbacks are concealed in the brightness. From another position only the unfavorable qualities appear, while the beauties are eclipsed in the shadows.

There is a great difference also in people's eyes. Some see only the sternness and the blemishes--but surely they are wiser who see even the little bits of loveliness that gleam out always amid the sternness, like beautiful vines and sweet flowers on the cold, bare mountain crags.

There is never an inconvenience in life--but has its compensating benefit, if only we have patience and faith enough to find it. The world is very large, with a great many people besides ourselves in it, and we must not expect all the blessings to come to us. Sometimes we may have to take a measure of discomfort, that our neighbor may reap a blessing. The rain that hurts our grass, may be a blessing to his garden. The wind that impedes the speed of our boat, may fill his sails. "It's an ill wind that blows nobody any good." Only selfishness can forget that there are other people who live beyond the hill, and that our inconvenience may be their advantage.

Even in our prayers, we need to remember that what we desire--may come to us only at the loss or the harming of another. Thus we are trained to temper our cravings, and moderate our askings for ourselves.

There is ground of comfort, therefore, when our requests for ourselves are not granted, in the thought that blessing may have been given to some other one, through the denying to us of our wishes. This ought to be to us an answer, for we are to love our neighbor as ourselves.

But usually the compensation lies nearer home. The poor boy who has to work hard, and who lacks the comforts and the good times that are enjoyed by the rich man's son--finds good balancing in the rugged health, the habits of industry and the manliness and fortitude that are the fruit of his daily toils, tasks and hardships. The man who labors all the day and is weary at nightfall--has compensation in his relish for food, and in the sweetness of his sleep. The poor man may have fewer comforts and greater privations--but he has none of the rich man's anxieties and cares. Lowly places in life may be less conspicuous, and there may be smaller honor attached to them--but there is also less responsibility; for to

whom much is given--of them much is required. Besides, contentment is more likely to dwell in the quiet valley--than on the mountain-top.

We may turn the lesson in other ways. If there is a steep hill to climb, the toil is repaid by the grander and wider view obtained from the summit. On the other hand, the quiet, lowly valleys may seem very commonplace under the shadow of the great hills--but they have their own advantages. They are sheltered from the storms, and the soil in them, receiving the wash from the hills, is richer. Getting up toward the stars appears to be promotion--but it is getting up, also, amid the tempests. Advancement brings fresh honor--but it also lays upon the shoulders new cares and burdens.

In personal experiences the same balancing is found. Pain is hard to endure--but it has also its compensation, unless by our own impatience and unbelief we rob ourselves of the comfort which God always sends with it and in it. Pain is meant to purify and whiten. Those who wear the radiant garments in glory--are those who have come up out of great tribulation. Thousands of sufferers have learned their richest and best life-lessons, in sore trials. The fires are hot--but holiness comes out of the flames. The pruning knife is sharp and cuts to the heart--but more and better fruit is the result afterward. The earthly loss is sore--but there is rich spiritual gain that comes from it. On the briery rod--lovely roses grow; and many of the sweetest blessings of life--are gathered from amid grief's sharp thorns.

Sorrow comes, and sorrow is always bitter and hard to endure--but divine comfort comes with it, unless in our blindness we thrust the blessed angel from our door. It was the Master himself who said, "Blessed are those who mourn--for they shall be comforted." This beatitude can mean only that God's comfort is so rich an experience, so great a blessing, to those who receive it--that it is well worth our while to mourn that we may get the comfort. Those who do not mourn, therefore, lose one of the richest, sweetest beatitudes of divine love.

Night draws down over us with its darkness, and we dread its coming; but when it deepens above our heads and day fades out of the sky, ten thousand stars flash out. The glorious stars are rich compensation for the darkness. So it is when the night of sorrow approaches. We shudder at its coming on--but we pass into its shadows, and heavenly comforts which we had not seen before appear glowing in silvery splendor above our heads. In the bright summer days clouds gather and blot out the blue of the sky and fill the air with ominous gloom and with fierce lightnings and terrific thunder-peals, but out of the clouds, rain pours down to refresh the thirsty earth and to give new life to the flowers and the plants. So it is, also, with the clouds of trial whose black folds oftentimes gather above us in our fair summer days of gladness--there is rich compensation in the blessings the heavy clouds bear to our lives.

There is a class of people in every community who have bodily imperfections or maimings of some kind which oftentimes seem to be sore misfortunes. Sometimes it is lameness that prevents a man from joining in life's swift race with his fellows; or it is blindness which shuts out the glories of day and dooms a man to walk in darkness; or it is some bodily deformity which mars the beauty of the human form; or it may be only confirmed physical feebleness which makes one a lifelong invalid.

Is there any compensation for these misfortunes? No doubt there are possible compensations in every case. Byron with his hideous clubbed foot, had a marvelous genius. It is well known that blindness is almost invariably alleviated, by the wonderful acuteness of the other senses. The late Mr. Fawcett of England said once to a company of blind people, "Those only know, who have felt it by their own experience, the wonderful compensatory forces which nature supplies. Although I should be the last to

underrate what is lost by those who cannot see with their eyes all the countless beauties of color and of form, the landscape bright with sunshine, or silvered over in the moonlight calm--yet, in some manner too subtle for me to attempt to analyze, the mental effect of association is so great that I find that the greatest pleasure can be derived from scenes I cannot see. If I am out walking or riding, I should feel it a distinct loss if I were not told that there was a beautiful sunset.

No doubt every misfortune brings within reach some compensating advantage, although it may not always be possible to tell what it is. There is in every case at least, the compensation of human love and sympathy. Mr. Holland has well said, "The mother of a poor misshapen idiot boy will, though she has half a score of bright and beautiful children besides, entertain for him a peculiar affection. He may not be able in his feeble-mindedness to appreciate it--but her heart brims with tenderness for him; and if he is a sufferer, the softest pillow and the tenderest nursing will be his. A love will be bestowed upon him which gold could not buy, and which no beauty of person and no brilliancy of natural gifts could possibly awaken. It is thus with every case of defect or eccentricity of person. So sure as the mother of a child sees in that child's person, any reason for the world to regard it with contempt or aversion--does she treat it with peculiar tenderness, as if she were commissioned by God--as, indeed, she is--to make up to it in the best coinage that which the world will certainly neglect to bestow."

The practical value of this study lies in the direction of contentment. Whatever may be our circumstances, there is in them a nice balancing of advantages and disadvantages which ought to keep us on the one hand from elation or pride--and on the other from undue depression or disheartenment. We need not envy those whose lot seems better than our own; for if we knew all their life, we would find amid the prosperities, some drawback that in discomfort fully counterbalances that which seems to us so attractive and enviable. We ought not to grieve over the hardness or the trial in our own lot, for, whatever it is, it has some compensation that makes it a real--or, certainly, a possible--blessing.

So we get here a lesson of peace. Not accidental are the events which befall us, or the circumstances by which our lives are borne along; all are directed by the hand of divine wisdom and love, and the good and the ill are so balanced that "all things work together for good to those who love God." Every ill carries in its bosom a compensating good; every dark cloud has its lining of silver.

Thus, from whatever side we look at life, we find this law of compensation. Toil is hard, but toiling knits the sinews of strength and toughens the fibers. Burdens are heavy--but life grows into calm power under the weight. Crosses bring pain--but they lift men up nearer to God. Duty is exacting and allows no rest--but faithfulness brings its blessed reward. There is no loss, but wrapped up in it, is a seed of gain; there is no darkness, but has its lamp shining somewhere in its very midst to illumine it.

Can it be but blind chance that produces all this marvelous result? Can it be only nature's working that so adjusts all the ten thousand wheels of life's intricate machinery that in their motions they evolve only harmonies in the end? Could any mere chance so set a good opposite every ill, a comfort over against every sorrow, a blessing to offset every trial? It would be no less incredible a thing if one were to assert that once a printer flung down a basket of letters--and the letters accidentally so arranged themselves as to produce in perfect lines, paragraphs and pages the Gospel of John.

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