

Losses

by J.R. Miller

The greatest loss a person can experience is the loss of God's smile or the interruption of fellowship with him, but if we have God, we can really need nothing else.

Scripture: Psalm 23:1, Psalm 46:1

Topics: "Communion with God", "Value of Spiritual Blessings"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes that the greatest loss we can experience is the breaking of our communion with God, overshadowing even the deepest earthly sorrows such as bereavement and loss of health. He reflects on how we often fail to appreciate the value of God's presence and blessings until they are taken from us, likening this to the realization of love and joy only in their absence. Miller encourages believers to recognize that even amidst earthly losses, the presence of God remains a source of comfort and strength, making all other losses bearable. He concludes that true appreciation for God's love often comes through the trials of life, which can clear the way for deeper spiritual understanding and connection. Ultimately, he reassures that if we have God, no loss is irreparable.

Transcript

There is no other loss, in all the range of possible losses, that is so great as the breaking of our communion with God. I know that this is not the ordinary estimate. We speak with heavy hearts--of our earthly sorrows. When bereavements come and our homes are emptied and our tender joys are borne away--we think that there is no grief like ours. Our lives are darkened, and very dreary does this earth appear to us--as we walk its paths in loneliness. The shadow that hangs about us, darkens all the world.

There are other losses--losses of friends by alienation or misunderstanding; losses of property, of comforts, of health, of reputation; the shattering of beautiful and brilliant hopes--but there is not one of these that is such a calamity--as the loss of God's smile or the interruption of fellowship with him.

Men sigh over those misfortunes which touch only their earthly circumstances--but forget that the worst of all misfortunes is the decay of spirituality in their hearts. It would be well if all of us understood this. There are earthly misfortunes, under which hearts remain all the while warm and tender, like the flower-roots beneath the winter's snows, ready to burst into glorious bloom when the glad springtime comes. Then there are worldly prosperities under which spiritual life withers and dies. Adversity is oftentimes the richest of blessings. But the loss of God's smile is always--the sorest of calamities.

We do not know what God is to us--until we lose the sense of his presence and the consciousness of his love.

This is true, indeed, of all blessings. We do not know their value to us--until they are imperiled or lost! We do not prize health--until it is shattered, and we begin to realize that we can never have it restored again! We do not recognize the richness of youth--until it has fled, with all its glorious opportunities, and worlds cannot buy it back! We do not appreciate the comforts and blessings of Providence, until we have been deprived of them and are driven out of warm homes into the cold paths of a dreary world! We do not estimate the value of our facilities for education and improvement, until the period of these opportunities is gone and we must enter the battle of life imperfectly equipped! We do not know how much our friends are to us--until they lie before us silent and cold. Ofttimes the empty place or the deep loneliness about us--is the first revealer of the worth of one we failed duly to prize while by our side.

In like manner, we do not know the blessedness of fellowship with God--until his face is darkened or he seems to have withdrawn himself. Jesus was never so precious to the disciples--as when they had him no more! Two of his friends, indeed, never openly confessed their love for him--until his body hung on the cross. They had secretly loved him all along--but now, as they saw that he was dead and that they could never, as they supposed, do anything more for him or enjoy his presence again--all their heart's silent love awoke in them, and they came boldly out and begged his body, gently took it down in the sight of the multitude, and bore it to loving burial. But for his death--they would never have realized how much they loved him or how much he was to them!

In like manner, David never knew what God and God's house were to his soul--until he was driven away from his home and could no more enter the sanctuary! As he fled away it seemed as if his very heart would break; yet his deepest sorrow was not for the joys of home left behind--for throne, crown, palace and honors--but for the house of God, with its hallowed and blessed communion. All the other bitter griefs and sorrows of the hour, were swallowed up in this greatest of all his griefs--separation from the divine presence. Nor do I believe that the privileges of divine fellowship had ever been so precious to him before while he enjoyed them without hindrance or interruption, as now when he looked from his exile toward the holy place and could not return to it!

Does not the very commonness of our religious blessings conceal from us, their inestimable value? Luther somewhere says, "If, in his gifts and benefits, God were more sparing and close-handed, we would learn to be more thankful." The very unbroken continuity of God's favors, causes us to lose sight of the Giver, and to forget to prize the gifts themselves. If there were gaps somewhere, we would learn to appreciate the outflow of the divine goodness.

Who is there among us all, who values highly enough, the tender summer of God's love, which broods over us with infinite warmth evermore? Our church privileges, our open Bibles, our religious liberty, our Sunday teachings and communings, our hours of prayer--do we prize these blessings as we would if we were suddenly torn away from them, by some cruel fortune and cast in a land where all these are lacking? Do we appreciate our privileges of fellowship with God--as we would if for an hour, his love should be withdrawn and the light of his presence put out?

There is something very sad in the thought, that we not only fail to value the rich blessings of God's love--but that we oftentimes thrust them from us, and refuse to take them, thereby both wounding the divine heart and impoverishing our own souls! It would be a very bitter thing, if any of us should first be made

truly aware of the presence and grace of Christ--by his vanishing forever from our sight, after having for long years stood with wondrous patience--at our locked and bolted doors! It would be a bitter thing to learn the blessedness of the things of the mercy and love of God, as we are often only made aware of the value of earthly blessings--by seeing them depart forever beyond our reach!

There is another phase of this subject which ought to bring unspeakable comfort to God's children, who are called to suffer earthly losses. If they have GOD left to them--no other loss is irreparable!

A wealthy man came home one evening with a heavy heart, and said that he had lost everything. Bankruptcy had overtaken him. "We are utterly beggared!" he said. "All is gone; there is nothing left! We must leave our home, and beg for tomorrow's bread!" His little five year old girl crept up on his knee, and, looking earnestly into his despairing face, said, "Why, papa, you have mamma and me left!"

What are temporal and worldly losses of the sorest kind--while God remains? Yes, what is the loss of money, houses, costly furniture, and other possessions, while God's love remains? There is surely enough in Him--to compensate a thousand times for every earthly loss! Our lives may be stripped bare--home, friends, riches, comforts, gone; every sweet voice of love, every note of joy silenced--and we may be driven out from brightness, tenderness and shelter--into the cold ways of sorrow; yet if we have God Himself left--ought it not to suffice? Is He not in Himself, infinitely more than all His gifts? If we have Him--can we really need anything else?

"The Lord is my Shepherd--I have everything I need!" Psalm 23:1

"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging." Psalm 46:1-3.

"Surely I am with you always--to the very end of the age!" Matthew 28:20.

"God Himself has said--Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." Hebrews 13:5

Therefore is it that so often we do not learn the depth and riches of God's love, and the sweetness of his presence, until other joys vanish out of our hands, and other loved presences fade away out of sight! The loss of temporal things seems oftentimes to be necessary to empty our hearts--that they may receive the things that are unseen and eternal. Into many a life God is never permitted to enter--until sorest earthly losses have made room for him. The door is never opened to him--until the soul's dead joys are being brought out; then, while it stands open, he enters bearing into it joys immortal. How often is it true, that the sweeping away of our earthly hopes--reveals the glory of our heart's refuge in God!

Someone has beautifully said, "Our refuges are like the nests of birds: in summer--they are hidden among the green leaves; but in winter--they are seen among the naked branches." Worldly losses but strip off the foliage and disclose to us our heart's warm nest in the bosom of God.

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