

Compensations

a sermon by Rev. Michael Gladish
Mitchellville, October 27th, 2019

“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul...
“The judgments of the Lord are true and just altogether.”
~ Psalm 19:7

No human tragedy is without its compensations. No evil or falsity is possible without an answer from the Lord. Indeed, He governs so fully in all the least particulars of His creation that every detail is accounted for, and measured, and balanced against those things arising out of human freedom that oppose and contradict what is good. So He said when He was glorified,

“All power (i.e., authority) is given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18), and “In the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer (literally, have confidence!), I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

“The law of the Lord is *perfect*.” It is all-comprehensive. This is the meaning of that word, “perfect:” all-inclusive, whole, complete. Nothing happens that isn’t included in the scheme of Providence. But of course the laws of Providence include “permissions” – things He doesn’t want but permits for the sake of the end, which is our salvation. And they include the necessity of temptations, trials, aches, pains and all kinds of suffering.

“Woe to the world because of offenses, for offenses must come, but woe to that man (*not the victim*, but the man) by whom the offense comes” (Matt. 18:7-8).

As we read in the Heavenly Doctrines,

“Temptations are the means by which evils and falsities are broken up and dispersed. They are also the means by which an abhorrence of these is produced, and a conscience is not only given but also strengthened, and a person is accordingly regenerated. This is the reason why those who are being regenerated are led into conflicts and undergo temptations and why those who do not experience them during their earthly life do so in the next life, provided they are such as can be regenerated” (AC 1692).

As we read in the lesson this morning, “As a general rule in such conflicts the Lord turns all evils intended by the hells into good, and therefore the hells are not allowed to evoke evils in excess of or different from those which can be turned into good appropriate for the person involved in the conflict.” A similar thing is said in another place where we read, “Every evil has its limits – varying from one individual to another – beyond which it is not allowed to go. When one who is evil goes beyond it he meets head on with punishment. This is so in every particular case” (AC 1857:2). The penalty or punishment, then, may serve to restore a state of external order in which spiritual things can work. (Note, although this particular quote refers specifically to those in the spiritual world, it applies equally to the spirit of every person living in this world – with the important exception that *here* they can inspire a real change in our character, but *there* one’s ruling love is fixed, and the consequences only serve to provide a framework of order.)

“The *law* of the Lord is perfect.”

There are times, of course, when we may feel that the Lord has forgotten us, that He has withdrawn or hidden His love or wisdom from us. But if we reflect thoughtfully we will see that He is still there.

Illustrations from nature come to mind – not that there’s anything bad about the cycles of nature, but deciduous trees, for example, lose all their leaves, all their fulness and color, during the winter months, and some far northern or southern regions have such short growing seasons you would think it would be hard for farmers to grow crops. But consider the compensations of nature: cold winter is when the earth least needs the shade of all those leafy trees, and what sun there is can easily penetrate to warm the earth or thaw the snow beneath them – snow, by the way, which we now know is vital for replenishing the water supply. Besides, the leaves and precious sap of the trees would surely be destroyed if they remained exposed through the winter as they are in the summer. Also, in at least some of those very harsh climates, although the summer growing months are short, the individual days are extraordinarily long – even up to 20 out of 24 hours! – allowing nearly as much growth to take place over a short period of weeks as would normally take months.

There are countless ways in which the Lord compensates and brings about equilibrium among species that are so unequal and varied that their very survival would seem impossible. Blind creatures, for example, hear exceptionally well, or have a very highly developed sense of touch or direction. Weak ones are camouflaged or have some fierce appearance for defense; slow ones are given intricate devices by which to catch their food, and some animals actually regenerate whole organs if they’re damaged or lost.

In these and millions of other ways the Lord provides for the balance of nature, which we now call “ecology.” And as we study this marvelous order we find that the main cause of all the disruptions and disturbances of that order is people – people in their perverted states, people in their foolishness and short-sighted personal ambitions.

But even here, the law of the Lord is most perfect. For what is lost or suppressed in the natural sphere may be gained or enhanced in the spirit. Everything in the world comes into existence and is maintained or destroyed according to the laws of influx and correspondence. These are the laws of cause and effect, and just so far as the limitations of nature allow it, our ever-changing spiritual states are reflected in the objects and conditions that surround us. Just thinking of our environmental concerns alone, isn't it clearly the greed and shortsightedness of human industry that causes air and water pollution? Isn't it carelessness or ignorance that results in the widespread abuse of many drugs and poisons?

The Lord's Providence, we read, is with the evil and the good constantly, but it is not *in* the evil itself. Rather the Lord foresees all the evil arising from our foolishness and provides that some good can come out of it. He *permits* evil for the sake of the end, which is our salvation. So it is true that we may have to suffer in many areas of our worldly life, but *this is never allowed without some compensation on the spiritual plane*, and very often – though it may not be obvious until years after an event – in some other worldly sphere as well.

Let's consider some illustrations from the Word. Remember how Abraham, for example, was called by the Lord to go and sacrifice his only son, Isaac, on Mount Moriah. Imagine the horror of that event as it began to unfold, especially given God's promise to make his heirs as the stars of the heavens and the sand of the seashore in multitude! Was all of that just a bad dream? No. It was a test, and having passed the test Abraham was given a ram to sacrifice instead of his son, and God's promise was, eventually, fulfilled more wonderfully than he ever could have imagined.

Again, think: did Jacob suffer grief and humiliation after he had worked seven *years* for Rachel only to find that he had been given the “weak-eyed Leah” instead, and told he had to work seven *more* years for Rachel? Of course he did! And yet the Lord compensated him with amazing miracles of animal breeding, so that he became a very wealthy man before he left Haran.

Did Joseph suffer when his own brothers sought to kill him, dumping him in a pit and then allowing him to be sold to itinerant slave traders? Did his father suffer when he found his son was missing, presumed mauled by a wild animal? Yet see how the Lord’s Providence works: years later, to their shock and amazement, Joseph’s family met him again in Egypt, where he said,

“...Do not be grieved, nor angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life... and God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you who sent me here, but God!” (Gen. 45:5-8).

Again, did David suffer after his own horrible sin with Bathsheba and subsequent murder of her husband? Did he suffer again when his own son, Absalom, rebelled against his kingdom, dying a traitor? Of course he did. He suffered miserably. And yet see how the Lord used David to establish His kingdom, and bless him, so that generations later He Himself could be born of his inheritance and live among us, and glorify His own Humanity.

Finally, ask yourself: did *the Lord* suffer when the very people He came to redeem and save from their sins despised and rejected Him, spat in His face and tortured Him on the cross? Think about this when you are feeling persecuted. The Writings tell us that the Lord

grieved immeasurably beyond what the finite mind can comprehend, because the love from which He acted and allowed Himself to be treated this way was from an infinite passion for the salvation of the whole human race! Yet see what the Lord accomplished through His suffering, and “have confidence,” for as He said, He overcame the world.

Do you know that throughout human history there hardly seems to be any great man or woman who has not at some time suffered great loss or been deeply hurt. Think of Abraham Lincoln, Beethoven, Mahatma Ghandi, Nelson Mandela, Franklin D. Roosevelt (just to start a long list). But the Lord gives compensations, and brings great goodness out of every evil, especially when we co-operate with Him to make it so. What, then, will WE do if we are offended, if we are tempted, if we are betrayed or tormented by some physical, social or spiritual problem? Will we reject the Lord’s encouragement and promise of support? Will we try to deny Him the satisfaction of using this situation to provide something good – for ourselves or others? Remember David’s words,

“Where can I go from Your Spirit? Or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me” (Ps. 139:7-10).

The nature of every temptation is that it serves to re-form and renew the receptive vessels for inflowing life from the Lord so that, instead of being stubborn, hard and contrary to the love and wisdom He provides, they are made soft and compliant. “This softening is effected by no other means than temptations, *for temptations remove all that is of the love of self and contempt for others in comparison with self,*

consequently all that is of self-glory, and also hatred and revenge on this account” (AC 3318:3).

Again, “Any falsity that the hells introduce is met with a response from the Divine. The falsities which come from hell are thrust into and enter the external or natural man, but the response from the Divine enters the internal or spiritual man. The person is less conscious of this response which comes from the Divine than he is of those falsities. It does not touch his individual thoughts, only his general awareness, yet in such a way that he scarcely comes to be conscious of it except as hope and consequent comfort, which however hold within them countless blessings of which the person has no knowledge” (AC 8159:3).

In the book, *Apocalypse Explained*, the manner of the Lord’s leading us through temptations is most beautifully described. Here we see that we are all, as to our spirits, continually walking among the spirits of heaven or hell. Through the sphere of our own affections and thoughts we are held in one sphere or the other, though of course we are completely unconscious of this: -

“Through these societies a person, that is, a person’s mind, although bound walks free; but he is led by the Lord, and he takes no step into which and from which the Lord does not lead; and yet the Lord grants continually that he shall have no other thought than that he goes of himself in full liberty; and he is permitted to persuade himself of this because it is according to a law of the Divine providence that man shall go wherever his affection wills. If his affection is evil he is conveyed through infernal societies; and if he does not look to the Lord he is

carried into these societies more interiorly and deeply. And yet the Lord leads him as if by the hand, permitting and withholding as far as man is willing to follow in freedom... (so that) he is brought by continual steps out of hell up towards heaven and into heaven” (AE 1174:2).

So now we can see, even as the Lord balances all things of nature, so He compensates and balances everything in human life. In winter states, states of spiritual cold, He withdraws the fulness and color of His truth into the interiors of our minds for protection from profanation, but still provides the bright light of His Word to guide our outward thoughts. And when the seasons of our lives are shortened, He gives us more time each day to reflect and to do the spiritual work we tend to neglect when we feel no urgency. To the spiritually blind He may give a most exquisite sense and awareness of Providence; to the weak He may give shelter under the wings of His reassuring truth, or an attitude of power and possibility that allows important uses to be served. To the slow He may give “extra” spiritual tools or opportunities. And most of all, to the whole human race which has lost the integrity and strength of will to do what is good He will give a new will in the understanding by which we can be completely regenerated!

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven; Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted... Blessed are they who are persecuted for justice’s sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:3-4, 10).

Remember, “The Divine Providence, in everything that it does, regards eternal things, and not temporal things except insofar as they accord with eternal things” (DP 214-220).

Let us, therefore, be as the Patriarchs in Genesis, as David, indeed as all great men and even in some small measure as the Lord Himself, and look to the uses and the compensations that *always* come along with any evil, indeed that *must* come with it under the Lord's Divine Providence, in every least detail of our lives. And let us *not* be as the disciples were when they heard the Lord's word to the rich young man, "...amazed, saying 'Who then can be saved?'" For as the Lord answered them, "With men this is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible" (Mark 10:27).

"The law of the Lord *is* perfect."

Amen.

Lessons: *Psalm 19*

Children's talk: the Law of the Lord is to Bless Everyone

Matthew 18:1-9

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