

# A GOOD INCOME FOR LIFE

## A SERMON

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By Mister JAMES WELLS

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“All the days of his life.” Jeremiah 52:34

THIS paragraph describes the providential dealings of the Lord with Jehoiachin by the instrumentality of Evil-merodaeh, the son of Nebuchadnezzar, who was then king of Babylon; yet the successive items of those dealings are so expressive that they seem almost to force themselves upon the mind in a spiritual form, and therefore I shall accommodate this morning what is said of the dealings of the Lord in his providence with Jehoiachin. I shall accommodate those items to spiritual things. Now it is true of every one of the six items that I shall name, that they lasted all the days of his life. And there is something to the Christian extremely comforting in the thought that the gospel is to him a lifetime income; that he has, by the gospel, an income for life, promises for life, a God that will guard him all through life. And, after all, our greatest concerns in some respects are in things pertaining to this life; because we well know that if we get to the end of this life right, then all will be well; if when we come to the end we are found where the psalmist describes when he said, “Mark the perfect man,” and none of us expect to be found there only as we are found in Christ, there is the perfection, “and behold the upright”, the man that is reconciled to God, and is upright in that reconciliation, and stands to it, and never falls out with God again, but remains in that bond of eternal truth, “the end of that man is peace.”

I will, therefore, this morning take a threefold view of the subject. First, *the dealings of the Lord as here set before us*. Secondly, *their duration*, “all the days of his life.” Thirdly and lastly, *several scriptures by which these things are very strikingly and beautifully exemplified*.

I notice, then, first, *the dealings of the Lord as here set before us*, with Jehoiachin, king, as he should have been, of Judah, but for thirty-seven years a captive. Now, however, the time came for him to be released. First, then, “Evil-merodach, king of Babylon, lifted up the head of Jehoiachin,” that is, gave him a hope of deliverance. This is the first item. Now it is sin “which has brought us down,” and when a sinner is made acquainted with his state as a sinner, he feels then that his heart and soul are bowed down, and he can in no wise lift up himself. Hence it was a right feeling the publican had when it is said of him, “He would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven.” And such a one said, How am I ever to lift up my head before God? How am I ever to lift up my eyes

to look at God? How am I ever to approach God? What a sinner, what a wretch I have been, and am, before God! What is to be done? Do not let us attempt to go through these items without the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us now see the way in which such a one shall lift up his head. You recollect what is said in the last verse of the 110th Psalm concerning Christ, "He shall drink of the brook by the way; therefore, shall he lift up the head." Now go to the 18th of Proverbs, at the 4th verse, and there you get the meaning; and you will see how it will come round to us, how nicely it is adapted to us, and by which our heads are lifted up before God: "The words of a man's mouth are as deep waters, and the wellspring of wisdom as a flowing brook."

Jesus Christ drank of this brook of wisdom; he so drank of it that he could always lift up his head, not only before man, but before God; for he never had a foolish thought, he never said a foolish word, and he never did a foolish thing. He was free from fault; all he did was perfectly right, and he could say before God, "I always do those things that please him." Jesus Christ lived this wise life, and died this wise death; he thus becomes our wisdom, and by him our sin and folly are put away, by our being brought to see that what he did was not for himself, it was for men of folly, it was for the unwise, it was for the sinner, it was for the foolish thing, the (weak thing, the base thing, the despicable thing, that is, a thing of nothing. These are the persons for whom he lived and died. Faith brings in the Redeemer in his perfection; there is an end to our sin and our folly; by faith in him we may lift up, our heads and meet the smiles of heaven; we shall meet, by faith in him, the approbation of heaven, the light of Jehovah's countenance; we shall thus meet our great Creator as our covenant God, dwelling between the cherubim, and he will shine forth. Here, then, we may say with David, "You are my glory, and the lifter up of my head." But mark, he is the glory first; and we believe it, and are led to receive it. We may lift up our heads, and look to our God, and say with one of old, "I will lift up my eyes unto the hills, whence comes my help." Evil-merodach, then, lifted up the head of Jehoiachin, and it was lifted up all the days of his life. And so, with us; we shall never be down again as we were before we knew Jesus Christ. It is what he has done, it is what he is, it is by precious faith in him that we have boldness to enter into the holy of holies, and that the blessed promise shall be realized, "They shall see his face, and shall reign for ever and ever." Has not the Lord, then, thus dealt with us? I was thinking this morning that I should like to see more conversions going on in our midst. Well, then, again, I thought, "How can that be? You are nearly all real Christians as it is; you nearly all know the truth. So, whether someone else had better take my pulpit, and I go away for a year or two, and preach here and there to people that are not Christians, I do not know. But so it is, that while, on the one hand, I long to see the work of the Lord going on in conversion, yet, on the other hand, I could not but bless the Lord for the thought that I could recognize so many hundreds in this place that know what I am talking about. They know what it is to be brought down under a sight and sense of sin; and they know that nothing but the revelation of Jesus Christ to them could lift them up, "raised up to sit together in heavenly places in Christ," the atonement and righteousness of Jesus Christ. If, then, we would lift up our heads, it must be by Jesus Christ; that is, by his wisdom, not by our own; except that our wisdom consists in the feeling our foolishness, and receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as that way in which we may rise, and do at times rise as eagles; run, and are not weary; walk, and shall not faint. Second, he brought him forth out of prison. Here we have another gospel blessing to go with us all the days of our life. He brought him forth out of prison. Now *he* brought him forth, Evil-merodach himself went into the prison and brought him out. Now Jesus Christ came into the prison of our law responsibility; he became a debtor to do the whole law; and he has perceptively, actively, and passively magnified the law, He has gone to the end of our law

responsibility, and has suffered all that sin has entailed. He has done a great deal more spiritually than Evil-merodach, king of Babylon, did literally. He brought forth Jehoiachin out of prison, but our Jesus Christ has destroyed our prison; there is no prison left. You cannot send the child of God to prison penalty; there is no prison to send him to. There is no law to take him; he is free; there is nothing against him. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." When I thus contemplate the Savior as having met the law, and then for me to bring my puny, lame, blind, sick, wretched, loathsome self to try to mend it, or to do something towards doing it over again, I do not wonder at the great God expressing himself so strongly upon this matter throughout his word. There is nothing so offensive to him as that that would set aside the person, work, and perfection of his dear Son. Your place, therefore, is to live in the freedom of the gospel. You owe the law nothing, and the law demands nothing of you. The last mite is paid. Christ's righteousness is divine; it is like himself; he is Jehovah our righteousness. And if sin be our prison, that is destroyed; if death be our prison, that is destroyed; and if hell was to be, which it was to be, our prison, Christ has the keys of it. In a word, as far as we are concerned, it is destroyed. Now you are to live in this freedom all the days of your life. I will not speak harshly, but I do think some of you, instead of living in this freedom, live with yourselves. Instead of leaving yourselves, and going to live with Jesus Christ, you leave him, and live with yourselves. And I will tell you how you do it. You say, or think, Now I have been pretty good to-day, and I expect God will bless me. Well, I prayed well before I came to chapel this morning, and I should think the Lord will bless me. Well, I have been very consistent; and I have been very liberal, have given a great deal one way and the other, and I should think the Lord will bless me. Now that is all self. By and by things are crooked, your temper is ruffled, and you find yourself capable of the same weaknesses and faults as other people. Ah, you say, I very much question my religion. I dare say you do; and down you go. So when Jesus Christ is the most needed, we are the most afraid of him; when the freedom of the gospel, rightly understood, should be most dear to us, we are frightened at it, and just at the time that condemnation is, as it were, the farthest from us in reality, for God never condemns a man that condemns himself, and sighs and seeks for mercy. Hence one of old said, "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved." Yes, you might as well, for you may depend upon it he will reprove you pretty sharply. And when the Lord came, did he reprove him? Not a word. "Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that reads it: for the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry." Well, what about my faults? I have done with them. Peter very much liked to be asked whether he loved the Lord, and the Lord gave him an operativity of saying that he did love him. Peter liked it the first and the second time; but the third time, Oh, I see what he is at now, he is raking up old grievances; he is just now going to cut me off; he is going to say, Now, Peter, if you had loved me you would not have done what you did. But to Peter's astonishment the Savior did not alter his tone, but in connection with the third time said, "Feed my sheep." Here, then, is freedom in Christ, brought out of prison. So, then, if we would live, in love with God our Father, in love with Christ, in love with the Spirit, in love with the gospel, it must be in the freedom of the gospel. All the time we live in self, and think the Lord deals with us not according to what Christ is, but according to what we are, then we live one foot in prison and the other out. I like that experience described in the Scriptures very much, "He makes my feet like hinds' feet, he makes me to walk upon my high places." He brought him forth out of prison. There are plenty of false gospels to take you prisoners; beware of them, give way to none of them. Never mind what people

say. The Son of God has made you free; let us stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and that all the days of our lives. So, then, he lifts up our heads, and we are free.

The next thing the king did was a very wonderful thing, an extraordinary, out-of-the-way, uncommon thing, an unheard of, an unseen thing almost. And what was that? Why, “spoke kindly unto him” all the days of his life. If I should speak kindly to you all the days of your life, or if any of you should speak kindly to me all the days of my life, it would be something uncommon and extraordinary. If every husband and every wife were to speak kindly to each other all the days of their lives, it would be an extraordinary thing. But so, it was here, he spoke kindly to him all the days of his life. So, our God. He spoke kindly unto us when he called us by his grace, and he has spoken kindly unto us ever since, and he will speak kindly unto us all the days of our life; and there will be no danger afterwards, because no manner of cause will exist after the end of this life for there to be anything but kindness. The law of kindness is the mightiest power in existence; it will do what nothing else can. Joseph’s brethren spoke very unkindly to him, and entered a protest against him, cast off this dreamer, as they called him, got rid of him. They told plenty of lies themselves. But the Lord spoke kindly to Joseph. They spoke very unkindly to him, but the Lord spoke so kindly to Joseph that Joseph, notwithstanding the unkindness of his brethren, was a fruitful bough, and his branches ran over the wall, not only was a blessing to his own congregation, but to others. The archers sorely grieved him, shot at him, protested against him, and hated him; and even his poor deluded father dreamt for twenty-two years that Joseph was no more. But the Lord spoke so kindly to Joseph that “his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel);” and Joseph was blessed unto the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills. That fell well upon Joseph’s ears; he was a lover of eternal things, and so he was blessed to the utmost bounds of eternal love, election, salvation, mercy, life, and glory; for all the circumstances of his life pointed to these ultimate objects, “unto the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills.” So, then, whoever may speak unkindly, the Lord will speak kindly to you. You know all the prophets, how unkindly the world spoke to them and of them, and how unkindly the world dealt with them. But the Lord dealt kindly with them. We have so many instances of this that I must not attempt to run through the testimonies put upon record of the Lord’s kindness to his people in contrast to and in opposition to the unkindness of their enemies; and even sometimes the unkindness of their own brethren and professed friends. I need not remind you of the dear Savior himself; how unkindly the world spoke of him and spoke to him. Had he have been all that they willfully and wickedly said he was, they could not have treated him worse. But they knew he was not. One of the protesters said to me the other day that protest *never ought* to have been entered at all. I said, Do you believe I hold with telling lies? He said, *We* do not believe you do. Well, I was glad of one coming to his senses, and I felt my heart at the moment freely forgave him. So, I say, if the Savior had been all that his enemies said he was, they could not have treated him worse. But how did the dear Savior speak to the world? He went on declaring his great mission into the world, that he came not to destroy, but to save; that he came not to extinguish light, but to be the light; that he came not to take away life, but to give life; that he came not to injure men, but to do them infinite and everlasting good. Even with his dying breath he prayed for his enemies. But how kindly God spoke unto Christ! There he received kindness when he could receive it nowhere else. And how kindly did he speak to his disciples! What an infinite, I was going to say, pleasure to trace out the dealings of the Savior with his disciples! And he does the same now, if we could but see it, or enter into the secret thereof. See that beautiful address, shall I call it, from the 13th to the 17th of John; nothing

but kindness from first to last, enough to win a heart of stone. How can we but love such a God as this? and whose kindness arises from the greatness of his love, and who declares, "The mountains may depart, and the hills be removed; yet shall my kindness not depart from you, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, says the Lord that has mercy on you." So, then, the Lord continues to speak kindly unto us. And while it is instructive and profitable to meet in public worship, for it is the Lord's own institution, and he will own and honor it, still at the same time you have your private meditations, and you will now and then get a nice kind word out of the Bible, as well as from the pulpit, or from hymns or good books, and other things. And it is very pleasing when you get a kind word with softening power from the Bible. Many of the people of God do not profit so much from this from a want of understanding. Solomon says, "There is that that is destroyed for lack of judgment," and so the Christian sometimes, some of the scriptures that he meets with seem to have a legal sort of twang, and he hardly knows how to manage them. For instance, how many a Christian has staggered at this! "He that is angry with his brother is a murderer." Well, says one, I have been, and therefore I am this character; but I never will be again. No, not till the next time; and how long will that be? As soon as ever you are offended. I have no more confidence in your old nature than I have in mine, and I have no more confidence in mine than I have in Satan. Well, say you, what are you to do then? Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; and he was never unjustly angry, and therefore never a murderer; and I must receive him in his freedom from it as my exemption from the guilt of it. It is no use, you may try to set up yourself to be as good as the precepts require, but there never was but one yet, and never will be while time shall last, who could come up to the close precepts of the word of the living God. We desire grace to be more and more conformed to those heavenly precepts, and we rejoice in the spirit of them, and we pray for an increase of that spirit that will render good for evil, and that "whosoever shall smite you on your one cheek, turn to him the other also;" but in perfection it was never done except by the Lord Jesus Christ. So, then, if you would have the Lord speak kindly unto you all the days of your life, you must look to Jesus Christ all the days of your life, and you will never be weary of so doing. "He spoke kindly unto him." Kindness is a wonderful thing. It is the great secret of the success of preaching the gospel. When the sinner sees that there is a Jesus Christ infinitely more able to save than sin is to destroy, when the sinner sees that God is love in his relation to the church, and when he sees that God is determined to be eternally glorified according to the amount or extent of the mercy which he shows, and as Goodwin well observes, "As he has determined to be glorified to the utmost, he has therefore determined to show mercy to the utmost, to bring about that end," when the sinner sees this, he may well sing, "His lovingkindness, O how great!"

So, then, the Lord will speak kindly to us all the days of our life. He has to me up to the present time, does now, and will do to the end of time. And if people speak unkindly to you, your best way is to run away from them if you can, if you are so placed, and pray to the Lord to teach them better, and look to the Lord, and he will speak kindly to you, and then you will feel that the kindness of the Lord is more than a substitute for all the kindness that creatures can show.

But, fourth, Jehoiachin's throne was set "above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon." How expressive is this! The Christian has a higher throne than the highest men in this world. Would the Christian change his place for that of the mightiest monarch that ever lived? No, no. The Christian's place is oneness with Jesus; an heir of God, joint-heir with Christ; his place is a holy, righteous, peaceful, glorious place; his place is the munitions of rocks; bread is given him, water is sure; and he has something surpassing all this world can produce. Then, fifth, "he changed

his prison garments.” So, the Lord has promised to give his people the oil of joy for mourning; the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Hence said one, “He has clothed me with the garments of salvation; he has covered me with the robe of righteousness.” And some of you, ever since you have put on humility, submitting to God’s way of mercy, you have never had a desire to throw that humility off, but still to sit at the dear Savior’s feet. And those of us that have been enabled to receive the robe of Christ’s righteousness, we feel we could not put it off; it is a glorious standing, a glorious position. But in the last place, and all these things put together seem to amount to perfection itself, “he did continually eat bread before the king all the days of his life.” So, we are brought before God and into the presence of God, and as long as Jesus Christ remains in the presence of God, so long shall his people remain. You will observe that the people of God are received into God’s presence by Jesus Christ, and there stands the promise, “My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” Jehoiachin was associated in eating with the king; that is to say, he partook of the same food, or he delighted in the same things, the same provisions, the same pleasant fruits. Now the things the people of God live upon are the testimonies of the gospel in Christ. “Your words were found, and I did eat them, and they were sweet unto my taste, sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.” And God himself delights in these testimonies of the gospel. “If any man hears my voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”

Let us notice, in the second place, the duration of these blessings. I will just enumerate them in the language of our text, and then go to the last part. First, then, his head was lifted up all the days of his life. Look at it, Christian, what a good life you have before you! You have the Holy Spirit to keep you believing in Jesus Christ; the day will never come when you shall not lift up your head to God. You have before you Jesus Christ, the lifter up of your head; the day will never come when he will cease to love you. “Having loved his own, he loved them unto the end.” You have God the Father, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Ah, then, let me say, if circumstances of affliction or adversity should be such that you can lift up your head nowhere else you can lift up your head there; there is a God that will sustain, that will bear, that will carry to old age, to hoar hairs, and will deliver. Make anything else your hope, gold, what is it? Why, like the eagles. God makes wings for your gold, and off it flies, like Job’s property. Make anything else your hope, there is no certainty. But there is certainty here; when I come to die, if I cannot lift up my head and boast of anything before man, I can lift up my head and glory in the cross of Christ. And so, he was brought out of prison; and we are made free all the days of our life. There never will be when we shall not have liberty in Christ; there never will be when we are not free there. There we may lift up our heads, because the Savior has put down into eternal silence everything that is against us. And the king spoke kindly unto him all the days of his life.

Circumstances are like the clouds, not in one shape, nor in one form, nor one height, nor one color, nor one position, for a day, or half a day, or half an hour sometimes; but the glorious truths of the gospel, his kindness, still the same. And he set his throne above the kings of Babylon all the days of his life. Now I believe I am stamped generally as a very high doctrine man; and I should reckon it the greatest calamity of my life if I were to live to see the day when I should come down one inch lower to please any one, let them be who they may. No; I want a religion that places my foot upon the lion, upon the adder, upon the young lion, upon the dragon, and enables me to trample the whole under foot.

Where is the power can reach them there,  
Or what can force them thence?  
He will sustain our weakest powers  
With his almighty arm.

Here, then, is a God that lifts up your head for life, that sets you free for life, speaks kindly to you all the days of your life, will keep you enthroned all the days of your life; you shall reign like a king, and your throne unshaken stands; you shall wear the royal robe all the days of your life, and be sustained all the days of your life. What more can you want?

Now, lastly, I have to notice *several scriptures by which these things are very strikingly and beautifully exemplified*. I will notice three different scriptures where we have the words of our text named, "All the days of his life." David upon this subject saith, "Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." What goodness and mercy? First, pastoral goodness and mercy. "He makes me to lie down," not in dry, but "in green pastures," new covenant promises; "he leads me beside the still waters," the deep mysteries of his wondrous kingdom; pastoral kindness, and restorative and directive goodness and mercy. "He restoreth my soul." I am sick, wretched, and miserable; he restores me to health; cast down, weary, everything against me; he restores me again. "He leads me in the paths of righteousness," paths of faith, righteousness of faith; "for his name's sake;" directive and restorative goodness and mercy. Also, accompaniment goodness and mercy. "Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for you are with me; your rod and your staff they comfort me." And then comes provisional goodness and mercy; "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." Go from the 23rd to the 27th Psalm, "One thing have I desired, of the Lord;" "that will I seek after." To be so good and pious that all the world should admire you? No, that is self-righteousness; no, "that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life." Well, what are you going to do? "To behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple. For in the time of trouble he shall bide me in his pavilion;" his royal pavilion, the place of his royal authority; and if I have God on my side in his sovereign authority, who can be against me? "In the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me;" where the mercy-seat is, that is where I like to be, he shall set me upon a rock. And what, then? "Now shall my head be lifted up above my enemies' round about me; therefore, will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yes, I will sing praises unto the Lord." Here, then, all the days of his life, goodness and mercy shall follow him; his soul falls in nicely with it, and seeks after the very thing which the Lord has for him. One more scripture upon this subject. Zacharias, in the 1st of Luke, said, "That we might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life." Here carefully note how Zacharias comes into possession of that holiness and that righteousness by which he knew he should serve the Lord acceptably all the days of his life. He said, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he has visited and redeemed his people," "and has raised up a horn of salvation." Oh, then, if you are going to get this holiness by faith in Christ's eternal redemption, I will come with you. "As he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began." So, here is redemption, and here is salvation. Well, that redemption brings holiness, and brings in everlasting righteousness. Salvation brings holiness, and brings in everlasting righteousness. "To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; the oath which he swore to our father Abraham," saying, "In you and in your seed," Christ Jesus, "shall all the families of the earth be

blessed.” So, then, Zacharias got this holiness and righteousness by faith in the redemption, salvation, mercy, and covenant of Christ, and the oath of God. Now, in conclusion, if you lose sight of all the rest, do pay attention to the spirit in which Zacharias desired all the days of his life to serve God. I do not think there is any scripture more expressive of the feeling of the right-minded than that there given: “That he would grant unto us that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.” Mark, that he would grant unto us to serve him.” How different this from the spirit in which people suppose that they do God a great favor, and that they merit great things at his hands, by a little formal service! But Zacharias looked at being admitted into the faith, the service of faith, the service of that faith that receives Christ as the end of sin, and thereby you serve God in Christ as your sanctification and your justification, Zacharias looked upon that as a divine grant; “that he would grant unto us to serve him in holiness and in righteousness all the days of our life.” So, by this peculiar service in the newness of the Spirit, this spiritual service, this service by faith, is a divine grant. Do not, therefore, let us think that we merit anything, or that we ought to claim anything at God’s hands, on the ground of any service we render; but let us admit it is the highest honor, next to the salvation of the soul itself, to be admitted into God’s service at all. And I am sure you must feel it so when you can realize the sweetness of his truth, and feel your soul carried out in admiration of your covenant God. You will say to yourself, What a happy people is this! their heads lifted up, made free, spoken kindly to, exalted above the highest honor of this world, arrayed in robes of immortality, fed and taken care of by the Lord himself, his goodness and his mercy following them, and he doing all these things for them, bringing them holiness by which they are to serve him, bringing them righteousness in which they are to serve him all the days of their life.

May the Lord make this glorious gospel increasingly dear to our hearts for his name’s sake.