

SUBSTANCE OF A SERMON PREACHED BY MR. C. HEMINGTON, AT GOWER STREET CHAPEL, LONDON, ON SUNDAY MORNING, 2nd OCTOBER, 1892.

Text: For My name's sake will I defer Mine anger, and for My praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off. Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction. For Mine own sake, even for Mine own sake, will I do it: for how should My name be polluted? and I will not give My glory unto another" (Isa.xlviii.9-11).

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The Lord defers His anger in reference to His people - that is, He spares them and bears with them, and He keeps them where He has put them. Where has the Lord put His people? I hope that some of you know, in your favoured moments, where the Lord has put you. He has put His people in Christ, where the raging billows of His wrath cannot reach them, as the waters of the flood were unable to come near Noah in the ark. What an expressive word, then, this is which the Lord our God here speaks to us, telling us that He will defer His anger, that is, He will do it to all eternity: "Thine anger is turned away" (Isa.xii.1). When there is a raging fire in this great city, if the wind shifts, the flames, which had been threatening whole streets, standing in the teeth of the wind, are turned away, inclining in an opposite direction, and the houses are left unconsumed. So God's anger is turned away from His people, and they are not consumed. "God is angry with the wicked every day" (Psa.vii.11), but He has no vindictive anger against His people. To declare otherwise would be to falsify the character of God. Our sins were all laid upon Christ. "The Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa.liii.6), and that is where all God's incensed anger fell - upon Christ. It was not turned away from Christ, but it was all turned upon Him, with all the vehemence that infinite justice could pour out. God, when this prophecy was written - yea, from everlasting - knew that it would be so. And, in the prospect of Christ's death upon the cross, Jehovah said: "I will defer Mine anger" - that is, all the anger which the iniquities of His people deserved. God (as it were) says: "I should pour out all My anger upon this people were I to mark their iniquities immediately. My justice shall nevertheless be maintained; a just measure of punishment shall be inflicted, but I will not inflict it upon them. I will defer it until My Son Christ appears in the world - until He comes in the flesh, until He shall voluntarily submit to all that vindictive anger being poured upon Him." My dear friends, that is the truth we need; that is the truth I love, the truth which keeps me

upon my legs, sustains me from day to day. I should have no hope were it not for this most blessed truth.

Again, we must take this other word in our text - I mean the word "refrain." These are two most significant words - two words, I might say, like two great doctrines prominently standing out here in the word of God: the word "defer" and the word "refrain." "For My praise will I refrain for thee, that I cut thee not off" - that is, that I send thee not to hell, where thou hast deserved to be sent, and where thou wouldst assuredly have gone but for My name's sake and for My praise. And what are we to understand by these two expressions - God's name's sake and God's praise. Well, in my own experience I have been led to understand them thus (and I can say very honestly that I have found a great sweetness at times in these blessed words of the prophet here and in other parts of the word): I understand by these two expressions that God will save His people for His own glory and for His own good pleasure. He was from the first resolved upon being glorified and getting praise to Himself throughout the countless ages of eternity for saving His people, chosen in Christ, from the wrath to come. And God ratifies His resolve, by pledging His very name and character, that He will accomplish His purpose in not casting off His people - although, In His infinite foreknowledge, He knew perfectly well that there would be enough in every chosen man and woman to provoke Him to cut them off and to send them to hell, where He could deal with them according to their sins and reward them according to their iniquities. God says two things in this chapter which have sometimes very much impressed my mind. It may not have been the same with you; that I must leave. "Because I knew that thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass" (verse 4). Mark that; take notice of that! "For I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb" (verse 8). Now these two declarations prove, in the clearest possible way, that God took into His consideration everything about His people - their dispositions, their spirits, their temperaments, their follies, their sins, their backslidings. Nothing has taken place in your lives or in my own which God did not foresee: not a circumstance, not a secret lust, not a corrupt thought, not a base imagination making you feel as filthy as hell itself, could be hidden from Him. Nothing has taken place concerning you since you have known God but what He not only foreknew, but also took into His merciful consideration before you were born. Has that ever been a comfort to you? It has been a very great comfort to me, helped me when I have been upon my knees before God.

I have many times said: "Lord, a worse wretch there could not be. A greater sinner than I feel myself to be could not drop upon his knees before Thy blessed Majesty. A more unprofitable one, Lord, Thou couldst not put Thy hand upon, one whose life has been more marked for what is contemptible." I refer not to outward things, nothing in my practical life. Many times I have said: "Lord, few and evil have the days of the years of my life been; but I believe that the whole of this was perfectly known to Thee before Thou didst separate me from my mother's womb." The Lord knows all about us. It must be so; it cannot be otherwise. To speak contrary to this would be to rob God of His infinite foreknowledge. And I would say, friends, let the truth here revealed be spoken, and let it be proclaimed to the honour of God. He Himself says: "For I knew that thou wouldest deal very treacherously, and wast called a transgressor from the womb."

Well, now, what has the blessed God done to meet all this? He has spread His plaster as broad as the sore; made His remedy as sovereignly efficacious as the malady requires; and He has done it by making His anger to turn right away from us, to spend itself upon Christ, and by causing His sovereign love and mercy through Christ to flow down to us. Now if you were to say: "Well, that particular line of truth is nothing to me," my answer would be this: "You must be a very strange kind of professor if this line of truth is nothing to you." What does Mr. Hart say?

"We all have sinned against our God;
Exception none can boast;
But he that feels the heaviest load
Will prize forgiveness most." (218)

And I am quite sure of this - that, if you are an exercised believer, troubled with lust and concupiscence and a tempting devil worrying you to death, sometimes with sin in your mortal members, you will just feel that if there is anything in the gospel to meet you, it is this - I will give it to you in Paul's words: "For He hath made Him to be sin for us, Who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (II Cor. v.21). The man that can pass that over, and feel little or nothing of it, or in it, is like a good many in the present day - a tough-skinned professor, walking much in carnal security, no better than a Hottentot in religion.

My dear friends, God loses nothing of His glory in having saved us, for He has secured His glory in our salvation by the atonement of His Son Jesus Christ, and gets the highest praise, and all the praise, for having saved us. Therefore, He says,

"For My name's sake will I defer Mine anger, and for My praise." As if the Lord would say: "Not for anything in you, or that you would ever be or do. I do it upon one ground only - for My name's sake and for My praise." But what a blessed thing it is to know that God is glorified in our salvation, and that all we can repay to the Lord (and that only by His own grace) is just to say: "Bless the name of the Lord! Bless the Lord, O my soul!" That is all we can repay to God. We praise Him for the use of our tongue, and every believer uses his tongue - that is, when he feels the goodness of the Lord. The prophet says: "O Lord, Thou art my God; I will exalt Thee, I will praise Thy name; for Thou hast done wonderful things; Thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth" (Isa.xxv.1). God's saints will never cease to praise Him for having saved them. God will never hear the last of His glorious praise; for it will continue to flow from the mouths of His saints throughout all time and throughout the countless ages of eternity. The Lord, then, help us to lay our salvation down at His feet, and help us to speak to Him about it and let Him know what we think of it (II Sam.vii.18-29)! And the Lord constrain us to tell Him how blessedly suitable we feel His salvation to be! O that He would give us, from time to time, such a feeling sense of His truth and of His salvation that we might thank Him for it! Have not you sometimes known what it is to take your own salvation, to have the witness of the Spirit with your spirit of being saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation, and then to be able to lay your salvation down, as it were, at the feet of the Lord, and to say: "Dear Lord, blessed God, Father, Son, and Spirit, oh, what a great and glorious salvation this is; what a suitable salvation I feel Thy salvation to be! I do bless Thee for having redeemed my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling" (Psa.cxvi.8). Lord, I will praise Thee as much as I can by Thy grace here; and when I get to heaven, Lord, I will bless Thee, with all the powers of my ransomed soul, without interruption and without intermission for ever and for ever, for having redeemed my soul from the lowest hell". If you look into the Bible, you will find this to have been the experience of God's saints - in both the Old Testament and the New.

Look at Hezekiah, after passing through that very deep and painful experience when the Lord had said to him: "Set thy house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live." The Lord plunged him into the deep; and the dear man cried out: "I am oppressed; undertake for me"; and there is no doubt that he was in bitter darkness of soul, because he said, "I shall not see the Lord,

in the land of the living." He felt that God had cut off his life; he turned his face to the wall; he spoke to God, he chattered like the crane or swallow. But the Lord delivered him, brought His salvation again to his heart. Then how blessedly the dear man was led to put his salvation down at the feet of the Lord, saying, "Thou hast in love to my soul, delivered it from the pit of corruption (Isa.xxxviii.1-17). And Paul says: "Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us" (II Cor.i.10).

But to pass on. "Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." Now this verse sets forth the Lord's ways and dealings with His people here in the world; and, oh, what trials do come upon God's living people, what strange and unlooked for trials! What is not a trial does not deserve to be called a trial. According to Scripture, every trial is a trial, but every trial is not a furnace, though some trials become a real furnace of affliction. In a time of ease we gather dross; the flesh grows. Do not you find that? I have for years found that to be the case, and I find it to be so in the time of ease - when things are going on fairly quietly at home and in the shop, when there is nothing in the family or in the church to disquiet or trouble the mind, when blessed with a fair amount of bodily health and cheerfulness of spirit, naturally considered. To be for long in such a place is dangerous. Why so? Because then the flesh is almost sure to grow. As a rule, the aboundings of nature greatly exceed the aboundings of grace. In such times I have found it so, but in the time of affliction there is a burning up. There is a particular process going on which purifies; and I do believe this - that God is determined to see something of Himself in His own children. You fathers and mothers have no objection to be told that your sons and daughters are like you. Do you think God objects to His people growing like Him? How does He do it? By burning Himself into their souls. A man gives his portrait to his wife in order that she may have it set in a brooch to wear. It will not be an ordinary photograph, but the likeness will be burnt in, left on the enamel that it may abide. And God has to burn Himself into the souls of His people. How does He do it? By putting them into the furnace of affliction. I quite believe that we have all got into a deplorable, dead, listless state in the present day as a denomination, and as a people. There is plenty of light, and there is plenty of knowledge; there are plenty of opinions expressed about different ministers and other things; but,

go where you will, it can be seen that the people have got into a dead, listless state, very little of the life of God in them. Now if God were to send (and He will some day send) a time of hot persecution upon the church, it would do us good. If we had to lose our property (Heb.x.34), or if we were scattered abroad, and could meet together only in some secluded spot, say, five miles out of London, in a secret way - now if such a day as that were to come, it would bring about a better state of things. And I am persuaded that, with the blessing of the Lord, it would be the forerunner of much more life and vigour in the souls of His people. But, still, in the darkest of times, God is determined to see something of Himself in His own people. Therefore He has to put them into the furnace and burn Himself into their souls. I am quite certain of this, because, through God's merciful goodness, I have a deeper knowledge of Him than I had some years ago - although I am still very much tried and exercised.

Gold in the furnace tried
Ne'er loses aught but dross;
So is the Christian purified
And bettered by the cross. (872)

God's furnace is profitable. Just hear what the Lord says in verse 17 of this chapter: "Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the Lord thy God Which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldst go." All the painful circumstances of life are made profitable to the children of God. In all of them we learn something; in every trial experience teaches wisdom. The soul is generally stirred up to make more of God when trials break our hold of the creature and snap the cord asunder with which we have been tying creature things to our heart. The more we lose of self and of earthly comforts, the more room there is for God in our hearts. Therefore He says: "Behold, I have refined thee but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction!"

"For Mine own sake, even for Mine own sake, will I do it: for how should My name be polluted? and I will not give My glory unto another." I want to call your attention again to what I regard as a very important thing in this part of God's holy word. In verse 9, as I pointed out to you, the Lord tells us what, for His own name's sake and for His own praise, He will not do. He says: "I will never destroy, cast off, or reject My people; I will never cease to love My people. I have taken them, by My own sovereign act, into My favour, and there they shall be for ever and for ever. But though, for My name's sake and for My praise, I will never cast my people into

hell, I will, for My name's sake and for My praise, put them into the furnace. For how should My name be polluted?" As if He should say: "Though I have declared, and confirmed my declaration with an oath, that I will never cast off the people whom I foreknew, yet I will put them into the furnace; they shall be refined; for Mine own sake will I do it: for how should My name be polluted?" The meaning is that, if God did not chasten us, humble us, bring crosses upon us, His name would be continually polluted by us. What of the Spirit of Christ would there be in your life, walk, and practice? Where would you have been, you whom Christ regenerated fifty years ago, formed Himself in your heart the hope of glory, and blessedly revealed Himself to you as your God? Where would you have been now if the Lord had left you without any trials - if there had been no stripping room for you to come into, nothing bitter, nothing against flesh and blood? Now I ask you again, where do you think you would have been? What would you have been in your life? Speaking of myself, I feel persuaded that God's name would have been most awfully polluted by me. I have such a wicked heart, and my vile nature is so prone and so ready to wander into anything which is wrong, that if the Lord had not put His hook into my nose and His bridle into my jaws by putting me into the furnace, saying: "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further" (Job xxxviii.11) - then I am certain that God's name would have been dreadfully polluted by me. And no doubt some of you feel the same.

It may be that some will say, "That is not scriptural." I say it is. Take one statement of the apostle Paul; and what a statement it is! "We are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world" (I Cor.xi.32). Again: "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth" (Heb.xii.6). Therefore, says God, "For Mine own sake, even for Mine own sake, will I do it: for how should My name be polluted? and I will not give My glory to another."

You see the Lord's primary object. Perhaps you do not make so much of this as I do; you may not have been so much exercised on this matter as I have, but we have a truth here that for some time has greatly exercised my mind - that is, that God's primary object in saving His people is His own glory. God is holy and pure, and there is nothing so dear to Him as His own glory. I desire to look at the whole economy of grace according to Scripture. I look at the fall of man and say to myself: "Why did God permit man to fall?" It was for His own glory. "Why all this misery in the world?" I ask. "Why all this sorrow and degradation of man?" For His own glory God has permitted all this to take place as the fruits and effects of the fall.

Well, now, God has a people in the world; there is a real church of Christ, a people separate from other people, a people that God Himself has set apart. He has determined to bring this people through their troubles, out of their distresses, and to receive them into heaven at last. Why all this? It was for the glory of God. What does Paul say? "To the praise of the glory of His grace" (Eph.i.6). That is it, you see. God is determined that He will not give His glory unto another. "Hearken unto Me, O Jacob and Israel, My called; I am He; I am the first, I also am the last" (verse 12). - Amen.
