

SUBSTANCE OF A SERMON PREACHED BY MR. HEMINGTON, AT GOWER  
STREET CHAPEL, LONDON, ON 8th FEBRUARY, 1891 (Evening)

Text: Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more: that which I see not teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more." (Job xxxiv.31,32)

LIBRARY OF THE  
GOSPEL STANDARD BAPTISTS

It is the grace of God - humility of soul and submission to God as the fruit of grace - which enables us at any time with the heart to say: "It is good for me that I have been afflicted" (Psa.cxix.71); to say, as we bow ourselves before God: "It is just and right and merciful for my God to have chastised me in the way that He has done. I am a very stubborn child, perverse, foolish, proud, fond of myself and of my own ways; therefore, I see the wisdom and prudence of my God in dealing with me as He has by laying me low under His chastening hand." I say it is the fruit of grace, heartfelt humility alone, that enables us thus to speak. I have many times, I trust, spoken precisely in that way to the Lord; but at other times such a posture of soul, such meekness and yielding to God's truth, such a falling into God's hands, and such expressions of filial submission to God, have been utterly beyond me. I could at such times no more drop before God, in the spirit of meekness and with such expressions, than I could command the sun to shine or the moon to withdraw its light. We have such a dim sight of the weakness of our own hearts. Don't you feel that? I have been learning, and so have some of you, for years what wicked hearts we have; and yet I feel the truth of the assertion I have just made: that we have even yet but a dim perception of the wickedness of our hearts and of their carnal reasoning and cavilling against God. Up to this day there are times when we rise up so full of rage against God that we seem to be set on fire. James speaks of the tongue, that "it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell" (Jas.iii.6). And we have, I must repeat it, the dimmest conception of the depth of iniquity there is in us. Now one thing is certain - and O that we could by the grace of God more fully believe it! - I mean what Elihu says to Job: namely, that God "will not lay upon man (that is, upon any of His children) more than is right," so that not one of His children can properly "enter into judgment with God" (Job xxxiv.23). Whatever our trials and afflictions at any time may be, either in providence or grace, yet, if we could only see this in God's light (that is, in the light of His merciful purpose and intentions concerning us), we should

see in a moment that there is not a drop of sorrow that comes upon us in reference to which we can rightly enter into judgment with God - that is, to prove to God that He is laying more trouble upon us than is really right.

Poor Job was sometimes led to think that a great deal more trouble was being laid upon him than was right; and for such unwarrantable conclusions Elihu reproves him, though he does so in the greatest of love. Herein Elihu stands out as a most blessed type of our God and Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. Elihu says: "If now thou hast understanding, hear this: hearken to the voice of my words. Shall even he that hateth right govern? and wilt thou condemn Him that is most just?" (verses 16,17). How very pointed all Elihu's questions are! How very profitable I have often found the book of Job to be!

I have sometimes thought that Job's character has been much misrepresented. There were, of course, grave defects in Job's judgment as to God's dealings with him. But I would not, as some have done, upbraid and brand Job as a legalist because of certain things to which he gave expressions. For instance, he says: "Till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me" (xxvii.5). I believe Job referred more particularly to his moral character in the general course of his life. His three friends had their doubts, and they threw out grave insinuations as to the moral character of Job. He simply said, "It is not true; I am not the man, the deceiver, you represent me to be; I am not guilty of the duplicity and prevarication with which you charge me, and I will hold fast my integrity till I die." And he had a perfect right to do so.

But the grave mistake with him was in putting this moral integrity too much in the place of that righteousness by which alone a sinner can be justified before God. So then I repeat just once more this reproof of Elihu: "Shall even he that hateth right govern? and wilt thou condemn Him that is most just?" We naturally hate the right. Have you learnt that that principle is in you? Our nature hates to be weaned, hates trial, hates God's truth, hates to be stripped of earthly goods, hates to have our temporal lot interfered with and to become embittered. Our nature hates all the divine and spiritual operations of the Holy Ghost upon the conscience (Rom.viii.7). Is it right, then, asks Elihu, that we should govern ourselves or our own steps and manage our own affairs? "Is it fit to say to a king, Thou art wicked? and to princes, Ye are ungodly? How much less to Him that accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor? for they all are the work of His hands. In a moment shall they die, and the people shall be troubled at midnight, and pass away: and the mighty shall be taken away

without hand. For His eyes are upon the ways of man, and He seeth all his goings. There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves. For He will not lay upon man more than right; that he should enter into judgment with God" (verses 18-23). Wilt thou, then, asks Elihu here, - wilt thou presume to enter into judgment with God? Wilt thou quarrel with God? Wilt thou call God to account? Wilt thou arraign God at the bar of thy erring judgment? Oh, friends, do you know anything about this in real experience? How frequently has all this taken place through the enmity of my carnal mind against the blessed God! You do not know much of the depravity of your nature if you have not discovered something of this in yours. Not all are plunged down as low into the depth of this experience as Job was, but I believe that all God's living children are brought in due time to behold this, and to repent in dust and ashes.

"Surely it is meet to be said unto God" - that is, it is proper and becoming of such poor, miserable, hell-deserving sinners as we are, whom the blessed God has taken into His favour, set His love upon, and designed to bring at last to glory. Why, says Elihu, it becometh us with great humility, with great prostration of soul, to fall before Him, to confess what hell-deserving sinners we are, and to say with meekness: "I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more: that which I see not teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more."

It is wonderful how our nature rises up against God. Nothing takes place in the family or in the business - nothing, I mean, that is particularly vexatious - but, oh, how our nature will sometimes rise up! We need to be kept in the spirit of the prophet's words: "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed" (Lam.iii.22). Do not you feel that it is the greatest wonder that you are not in hell? I do sometimes very much feel that.

When I think of the sovereignty of God and His inflexible justice; when I think of the heinousness of sin; when I remember that "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts x.34), that He does not take poor wretched sinners upon the ground of what He sees in them; when He gives me, as He often does, any humbling discoveries of my nature - and not only this, but what iniquities and very grave transgressions I have been guilty of, and also of the depravity of my nature - why, there is nothing that fills me with more astonishment than that God should not have left me to drop into the pit of perdition, where I deserve to have been a long time ago.

And when we can, in our sweet moments, feel a blessed hope that we shall never go there; when the Lord more particularly favours us and gives us to feel His presence; and when we have a measure of His tender fear in exercise in our hearts - then there will be compunction and humility as we drop at His blessed feet. Then, as we look back to the time when trials came upon us, and when humblings and chastenings were with us, in such moments we find no rising against Christ, no entering into judgment with God; no dictating to Him, but in the spirit of meekness we then say: "If I have done iniquity, I will do no more."

God has never been under any obligation to us as mere creatures. I desire to feel more and more, every day I live, the truth of this. To hear some people talk, it would appear as if they think that God is under a very great obligation to them. I am sure that God was never under any obligation to me. If God saves any of us who are now in this chapel, it is just because He will save us for His own glory. If God has loved us with an everlasting love (Jer.xxxi.3), it is just because His love is a free gift and cannot be obtained in any other way (Hos.xiv.4). He says: "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion" (Rom.ix.15). The argument of the legalist in the present day as to meriting divine favour is one thing which, in my opinion, makes the day so perilous (II Tim.iii.1). We speak about Popery, and there is much reason why we should do so. O that God would deliver His people from apathy and indifference! It seems to settle like a blight upon the church. The advance of Popery, atheism, and infidelity, and the awful way in which iniquity in various ways is rushing like a torrent in all directions - influencing and utterly gaining the minds of many - should cause us to take these things to heart; and I believe that God will make His people take them to heart. What thousands and tens of thousands there are in a religious profession who are for ever talking about their wonderful works and activities! As Mr. Huntington says, in one of his works, "They can run here and run there; some like one man and some another." Oh, what a servant of God was he! What a dissector of human nature! He had a wonderfully deep knowledge of the human heart. He knew what he himself was. That was why, through divine teaching, he knew his God so well. Thousands and thousands are striving to enter into the love of God, but, as the apostle Paul says, No man is "crowned except he strive lawfully" (II Tim.ii.5). A man may strive and aim to be crowned, just as, when men run a race, every man makes it his object to win. So thousands, under a profession of religion, make it their object to win. They read that, to be saved, a man must overcome (Rev.ii and iii), they make it their object to

overcome, and they strive again and again to get into the love of God. But the apostle says that no man is crowned except he strive lawfully. Do you understand what it is to strive lawfully? It is to "stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord" (Exod. xiv.13). To strive lawfully is to be brought in spirit to accept this doctrine which I do hope God has brought you and me to accept: "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy" (Rom.ix.16). No man has striven lawfully until the love of God has been put into his heart; for "love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom.xiii.10). As Mr. Huntington says, thousands run in order to get into this love. They are very zealous; they are very persevering; they perform noble deeds; and they are carrying out in the present day prodigious schemes for the social and moral reform of their fellow creatures who are in poverty and distress. And people are so blind that they can draw no distinction between moral reform and soul-saving religion; and so they think that, if some great scheme is carried out for the moral good of the nation, it will bring them into the love of God. They run upon the foot of free will, and think they will run into the love, the promises, and the good things of God. But God says: "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong" (Eccles.ix.11). I am not against any national movement that is causing a reform, but I am against everything in religion which will not stand the test of the truth of God - such as music, yelling, drums, etc. I would not speak rashly, but I believe we are living in times when so-called religious movements take such a subtle and disguised form that, "if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (Matt.xxiv.24). God will take care that His own people shall not be deceived. God grant, then, that His own hand may be at work to keep our hearts, enabling us to hold fast "the simplicity that is in Christ" (II Cor.xi.3).

God's truth never changes. What the gospel of Christ was eighteen hundred years ago, that it is now, and that it will be until the time when ~~the Son~~ of God Himself shall come in person and decide all men's future condition. This is a great truth of the gospel, and it applies to every one of us here: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John iii.3). We must have the truth of God written upon our hearts. Do not think me uncharitable, but I assure you that I feel increasingly the truth of this one declaration already mentioned. "For many are called, but few are chosen" (Matt.xxii.14). "Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it (Matt.vii.14).

Look at the Pharisees: they visited, they made long prayers, they went to great lengths in religion, and you see what they got for it - they received a greater damnation. Look

at that young man in the gospel. Are there not numbers in the present day who answer to that character? I am persuaded there are. He came to Christ, he asked a question, and Christ took him upon his own ground, reminding him of what the commandments require. The young man said: "All these things have I kept from my youth up," and of course he thought he deserved to be put into the love of God for his good behaviour. But Christ sent him away with sorrow, for the love of the world was in his heart; and we hear no more of that young man. Esau wept bitterly that he might obtain the birthright, but he obtained it not, "though he sought it carefully with tears" (Heb.xii.13).

Well, then, if God, who has never been under any obligation to us, has nevertheless shown us mercy and put us into His love; if you have reason to believe that memorable moment came in your mortal life when God passed by you and said "Live" as you lay in your blood (Ezek.xvi.6); and if you can certify with a good conscience that God has given you some knowledge of the pardon of all your sins and a hope of eternal life - well, then, as Elihu says, "it is meet," it is most proper, that you should walk very humbly with God, that you should accept the chastisement of your iniquity. How we do forget the words of our God! Look at His language by Paul, where He shows us so clearly and blessedly that fatherly chastisements are proofs of sonship. For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth" (Heb.xii.6). To be without chastisement is to have a black mark; it is to be a bastard, not a son.

"Gold in the furnace tried  
Ne'er loses aught but dross" (872)

So it is with the Christian. When losses and afflictions come upon him, it seems as though they would overwhelm him, but not so when the Lord shows him that He is in love chastising him. And I believe that, without the furnace, without the rod, without these humbling operations of God's Spirit, you bear no marks of being God's living children. Therefore it is a blessed thing if you can see that all the crosses, adversities, chastisements, afflictions, disappointments, bereavements, and everything which is of a sorrowful nature, are really sent by a loving Father. So, if we are God's living children, two things will take place while we are under His chastening hand: First, God will permit nature to work - sometimes in my case to such a pitch of rage that I have had very hard thoughts of God, quarelling, resisting, Oh, what a contemptible spirit of resentment has at times risen up within me when looking at my trials! Secondly, the Lord in due time makes us to understand that it is of no use to contend with Him (Job.ix.3). Many times God has shown me that I could

not enter into judgment with Him, and tell Him that He has been laying upon me more than was right. So there will be a spirit of meekness. The Lord will bring us to kiss the rod, to bow to His will, and bring us to say - and to say it with humility - "I have borne chastisement, I will not offend any more." And the child of God, when under this spirit of godly submission, will say: "Lord, I do not want to offend Thee, I do not want to find fault or to quarrel with Thee any more. I do not want (such a despicable and contemptible creature as I am) to enter into judgment with Thee." "That which I see not teach Thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more." It is very good when we are brought down to the Lord's feet, made to feel our own ignorance, to feel what poor, blind, erring creatures we are. And do not you feel before God - you that are getting old, you that have been making a profession for a great many years - what I have before said today: that you know but very little of God and very little of His truth?

Why, young believers who have not been in the divine life for five years, they are not aware how their own spirit leads them astray; and, you may depend upon it, they think they know more than old believers know.

But I do like this tender spirit, this childlike simplicity, this yielding to God, this falling into God's hands, which is our proper place. And when do we take our proper place before God; when is it we are in a right spirit before Him? When am I right with Him? When I am humble, when I have very mean thoughts of myself, when I feel that I am a poor ignorant being, when I drop before Him and realize how very little I know of Him. It is when the iniquity of my heart is revealed to me, and I go into the presence of God feeling that, if He had sent me to hell long ago, He would have been a just God. It is when I am enabled to say: "That which I see not teach Thou me." "Lord, here I am. Do ever teach me, guide me, lead me, keep me, humble me, and suppress in me that spirit of resentment and rebellion which is so often uppermost in me (Gal.v.17). Lord, there is a very hell in my heart (Rom.vii.14). Do preserve me and keep my heart in restraint (Prov.iv.23). Lord, there is so much in me that rises up against Thee (James iv.5). I feel it daily (Rom.vii.24). Break it down! I feel it daily quenching the glory of heaven (I Thess.v.19). Lord, put forth Thy power and bring me into subjection, into "the obedience of Christ" (II Cor.x.5). Humble me in spirit, make me feel how contemptible I am (Job.xl.4). Make me feel Thou hast loved me not because of anything in me, but because Thou wouldst (Deut.vii.7,8); make me feel I am Thine in Thy dear Son." "If I have

dome iniquity, I will do no more." Job does not refer so much to the sins, the ordinary sins - the every-day iniquities, so to speak - which a man inevitably commits (because, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves," (I John.i.8)). But Job means: "If I have committed such iniquities as these men believe I have committed, I am not conscious that I have done such things. Lord", he virtually says, "I do not know that I have acted the hypocrite and acquiesced in such wickedness. But, O Lord, if I should have been guilty, then do show me and let me not commit such iniquity again." There we see the humility of a child of God. May the Lord give His blessing to these remarks, for His name's sake!