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Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden at "Galeed"
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"Fury is not in me: who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them I would burn them together. Or let him take hold of my strength that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me."

Isaiah 27 v 4 & 5.

In this chapter we have the care that God has over His church, and therefore, the care that He has for everyone of His people. For it is well to remember that everything declared concerning the church, every blessing that is in the church of God is declared on the behalf of His people to the last individual. O it would be a consolation to those that fear God if they could more often remember that the whole of the Word of God and all the Gospel of His grace and the glorious things that are spoken of Zion, belongs to them. It may be that some of you may say, I believe that, but O I want to know that they belong to me!

"In that day sing ye unto her, a vineyard of red wine." The church of God is a vineyard, it is not a common, not a waste howling wilderness, but it is a garden enclosed, a spring shut up for His own use. The Lord is jealous over His church with the jealousy of love, and although it is a garden enclosed, it is in the wilderness, the waste howling wilderness of this world, but it is not of it and therefore, "I do keep it, I the Lord do keep it". Remember that all these things are said to His people. This did not end with Isaiah, the Word of God is eternal, uncorruptible, "Heaven and earth shall pass away but the Word of God shall not pass away". This will not pass away. "I the Lord do keep it" and you will need Him to keep you; and there is an inheritance reserved in heaven for those who are "Kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation". "I will water it every moment"; and none of this water is stagnant. We read of those in Egypt who watered the land with the foot, i.e., they carried their water and watered their land, but this land is watered with rain from heaven.

Everything in the church of God is from heaven, the church itself proceeds from heaven. The glorious Head is in heaven. "Lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day". Well then, there is the security of the church. "Kept by the power of God". "The Lord keepeth the feet of His saints". He preserveth them, even in the day of their unregeneracy. The eyes of the Lord is never off His people, they were upon them in eternity. And then we come to the text -

"Fury is not in me". It is in Him, but not toward His people. In Nahum we read the very opposite: "God is jealous and the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth and is furious, the Lord will take vengeance of His adversaries and He reserveth wrath for His enemies". Now that belongs to all His enemies and what a solemn thing it is to be an enemy of the Almighty God; and we are either His enemies or His friends, "And ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you". This then, is a part of His tender love, His lovingkindness toward the church.

"I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every moment, lest any hurt it I will keep it night and day". "Fury is not in me: toward His church. He does chasten them, He corrects them in measure but there is no fury in the Lord toward His people. It is a beautiful word to my mind in Job; as Job ventured toward this great God, who, out of Christ is a consuming fire, you can almost visualise Job, His heart burdened, his afflicted body, his distressed mind, his broken heart; "Will He plead against me with His great power?" But he had faith, he believed the text, "Fury is not in me", "No

He would put strength in me". "Fury is not in me" and then He demonstrates it, "Who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together". I could not but think of this word when I was trying in my little way to pour out my heart before Him, full of briers and thorns, full of objections, felt in myself why the Lord should be furious with me, and there are briers and thorns, they are not contradicted here and if under a sense of your sin as you review your past life, a painful sight, a trembling sight, when you consider how from day to day you wandered from God, the lust of the flesh, the pride of life, unbelief sometimes questions whether there is a God or not. When that fool is not far from us who says "There is no God", when you consider your rebelliousness, how that you grumble and repine with blessings in your hand; when you realise how you are wearied of Him, often you bring these things as you feel them, you bring these briers and thorns against Him in battle, your objections, how you feel that while you cannot see how He can bless you yet like Jacob, he wrestled with Him, you may depend upon it Jacob had those briers and thorns in remembrance in the way that he treated his old father and deceived and supplanted his brother. He knew that he deserved his brother's anger and fury and he brought these briers and thorns as he wrestled with the Angel. But this is the answer of the Lord to a poor trembling, burdened sinner: "Fury is not in me". Why it would break your heart if you thought it was, when you expected that fury, when you deserved it and then He said "Fury is not in me" "Who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle?" - and His people do in confession of their sins.

And you may also bring your difficulties, your impossibilities, bring your enemies before Him, are all like briers and thorns in the wilderness through which you must pass. Your pathway may be strewn with briers and thorns, and O to gather them all up and bring them to this blessed Lord, and then to hear His voice, "Fury is not in me". "I am meek and lowly in heart, ye shall find rest unto your souls". "Fury is not in me".

"Who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together". What would burn them? His zeal, His love. O my friends the love of God! no water could drown it, nor floods quench it. The zeal of His love to His dear people would go through everything that would hurt them. Would overthrow every enemy that rises up against them. His divine compassion toward His people when they are in trouble, when they are brought to the very ends of the earth, then it is that He goes through everything to reach them and to bring succour and grace sufficient. "Look unto Me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth, for I am God and there is none else".

Well, are you a stranger to the 41st verse? Have you no briers and thorns? as there is discovered to you your innumerable sins and the different nature of your different sins, and how you feel that the Lord would be just if He burst forth upon you in His fury. How may He help poor entangled, troubled sinners who may be in the midst of thorns and briers both in their souls conflict and in the pathway of life, help them to bring these briers and thorns against the Lord in battle? The case of Jacob is very precious upon this point. He was alone with the Lord, He had sent all his possessions over the brook. There were many troubles out of which the immense riches of Jacob could have delivered him, rich people can often buy themselves out of trouble, but when the Lord is dealing with a sinner, He makes such a wound, brings him to such soul trouble as that none can deliver him, and whatever he possesses he cannot buy himself out of it. So Jacob sent all his possessions over the brook and he was alone with God, and then there was this battle; there were the briers and thorns, Jacob never forgot his sins although the Lord forgave him and called him by His grace at Bethel and blessed him, when he was alone with the Lord he had a guilty conscience. When they told him that Esau was coming against him with 400 men armed, he knew he deserved it, but he wrestled with the Angel, or rather, the Angel wrestled with him and it was a battle. It would be a wonderful thing my friends if we were thus exercised in our souls and brought before the Lord those things that

threaten our destruction, the world, the flesh and the devil, our own deceitful and desperately wicked hearts, our sins, the sins that do so easily beset us, our pride and arrogance on the one hand, our fainting on the other. "Fury is not in me, who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them I would burn them together. Or let him take hold of my strength". This poor, trembling sinner, and if the Lord goes through the thorns and briers and burns them together then a poor sinner can get to the Lord.

"Let him take hold of my strength". Well, what is this strength? It is the Lord Jesus Himself, He is at the right hand of God, which denotes His power, let him take hold of Christ's strength. Well, Jacob did although his thigh was put out of joint, yet he took hold of the strength and the Angel wrestled with him, he did not wrestle against him, he wrestled with him and put strength into him, and O poor sinner, wrestling, wrestling it may be upon your bed of a night, bringing all the briers and thorns to the Lord Jesus and for Him so to take up your case as to allow you to take hold of His strength. This is for weak people. My friends, I can see nothing in the Scriptures to encourage self confidence, a carnal confidence, a light and frivolous religion. If you notice the characters and the places the conditions in which His people are brought, they are brought to a state wherein none other than the almighty God can deliver them. They are brought into sorrows in which none but the Lord Himself can comfort them; brought to the end of their wisdom where they need the wisdom of God to direct them.

"Or let him take hold of my strength". We would look at this as enabled, a few particulars, this is the strength of Christ, the strength of almighty God incarnate. We could never take hold of Christ's strength if He had never become man. O may we hold fast to that foundation. The eternal God in human nature by which poor sinners can take hold of Him, by which He can take hold of them and keep them. It is a wonderful thing. O that we might pause from time to time as we approach these sacred truths, that faith may be brought to a gracious, spiritual amazement; you think of it! that the Lord to His people has no anger, no penal wrath, and whatever you bring to Him that is against you, He will go through it, indeed He has gone through these briers and thorns in all the work of salvation. That is just what He was doing, there were all the thorns and briers of His people in the fall, the whole multitude of their innumerable sins and all their backslidings, their unbelief, their rebellion, their ruin, He was going through those briers and thorns as He fulfilled the law on their behalf, as He gave unto divine justice infinite satisfaction; as He endured the cross and despised the shame; as He was tempted 40 days in the wilderness He was going through these briers and thorns for His dear people; and then He says, now let him, this coming, broken-hearted, repenting trembling sinner, "let him take hold of my strength" And the first thing is the strength of His atoning blood because sin is the cause of all weakness. Sin is a desolating thing, sin is a destroying power, sin is a damnable thing, and this can only be dealt with by the precious blood of Christ, that fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. "Let him take hold of that". Paul says to the Ephesians, "Ye who sometimes were afar off are now made nigh by the blood of Christ". Well, you take hold of the strength of Christ's precious blood is for faith to plead it, and the blood of Christ does not only intend that liquid that flowed from His sacred side, but the life was in the blood, His infinite merit is in the blood, the payment of the debt was in His blood; "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things such as silver and gold...but with the precious blood of Christ". He paid redemptions price with His blood and He says, "Let him take hold" of it, by the hands of faith. Well, going so far perhaps this may be an interpretation - some of you may be doing this and yet have not known or thought anything about the text. Some of you in your troubled state might have ~~been~~ just brought in your conscience, in your groaning, in your mourning toward the Lord all your briers and thorns in battle and He has gone through them and burned them together. "Let him take hold of my strength"; let him, who is to hinder? as it says at the other end of the text, "He shall make peace with me". The devil may say

you will not, your unbelief may say I cannot, but the Lord says, "He shall make peace with me" through the blood of atonement, ~~the~~ "peace by His cross hath Jesus made". But to take hold of it is for faith to bring it in by the Spirit, O to have the blood of Christ upon the conscience is to have your sins blotted out. I have looked at my sins, my past life and it has appeared impossible for them to be blotted out, but the Lord says, they can be, "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us", and this is by faith taking hold of Christ, the strength of God, the Gospel is the strength of God, it is the power of God unto salvation and it is the Gospel of the grace of God. The whole of the Gospel is in the fullness of Christ and therein is revealed the righteousness of Christ from faith to faith; so that there will be a taking hold of Christ's righteousness; and you may feel as faith is strengthened, to go "I will go in the strength of the Lord God, I will make mention of His name, even of His only". But O this taking hold is contact. It is not just reading the Scriptures, it is not just hearing a sermon, but there is some mighty influence by the Spirit in your soul by which you have contact with Christ in all the merit of His person.

Righteousness, it is imputed, we have to look for nothing in ourselves we are apt to look there, we are legal, and all the time we can find anything in ourselves we shall not seek the Lord with all our heart. But do you feel to need this righteousness which is to full perfection? We were speaking lately, "Walk before Me and be thou perfect" and when the Lord says to a poor sinner "Take hold of my strength", then He has made available to him all the perfection of Christ. A righteousness to full perfection. And how we need it! Have you ever felt your unrighteousness? Ever felt in your own soul there is nothing right? - not only read in the Romans but believe in your experience that "In you, that is in your flesh, there dwelleth no good thing". O it is well to examine these Scriptures, we have been so long acquainted with, lest they lose their meaning. Beware of becoming Gospel hardened and Gospel deafened. There are some poor people in some parts of the world and doubtless some of them are the Lord's people, who never hear a sermon at all; you may depend upon it that they hunger and thirst for the living God. Beware lest having so much of the means of grace, so many services and so much preaching, that you either become deaf or hardened. But O, if we feel our ruin, if it is brought home to us from day to day, conviction we need daily, we shall realise that we are vile, but this blessed righteousness is imputed. It brings the holiness of the Lord Jesus; not only inwardly, but it brings forth fruit outwardly. "She is all glorious within", she is glorious within in a work of grace in her soul, "She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needlework": it is the wedding garment. O how the prodigal rejoiced! How surprised he was when he went back to his father's house, how he must have anticipated his father's anger and his fury, but that father said just the same thing as the text, when his unfaithful son, a waster, a backslider, ruined, for substance his father said, fury is not in me, "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him", the righteousness of the Lord Jesus for sinners,

"And lest the shadow of a spot
Should on my soul be found,
He took the robe the Saviour wrought
And cast it all around".

Let him take hold of it. As though He would rebuke everything that hindered this poor sinner from coming, that He would rebuke Satan for their sins, set wide open the Gospel door. Very similar to that word in James, "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray", Let him pray, there is the Redeemer, who shall attempt to hinder or prohibit that poor sinner from praying, Let him pray. "Let him take hold of my strength". Then there is grace. "Let

us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." O when faith can take hold of Christ's grace there is something so solid, something so establishing. You will have the heart established with grace and sometimes you are able to take hold of Christ's strength in grace when you are at the throne of grace. Have you ever felt your faith almost as though you felt, as it were, your arms going out at the throne of grace to take hold of Christ, to bring Him in, to bring into your heart all that He is and all that He has? Grace. Paul took hold of it; he was weak, the thorn in the flesh had made him weak, he would have taken another course, he would have had those thorns extracted, he prayed three times for those thorns to be extracted, the Lord answered his prayer but not as he thought, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness". And so, when a weak sinner goes to the throne of grace, the Lord holds out the golden sceptre, he takes hold of it as did Queen Esther, and she found favour in His sight, He promised to give her all her request to the half of his kingdom; but when a poor sinner takes hold of the grace of Christ, then He gives that sinner, not the half of the kingdom, but the whole of it.

"Let him take hold of my strength". Love. Love, strong as death. Can His love be taken hold of? Yes; How and when? When it is shed abroad in the heart. "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love" and when faith sees that love, His everlasting love, proceeding from the electing love of the Father, the covenant love of the Trinity, the love of the Lord Jesus Christ who was rich, yet in love became poor that poor sinners might be made rich; love and condescension in His sufferings, His ignominy, reproaches, and death; Let him take hold of it, and what is it for a poor sinner to take hold of Christ's love? why, to bring in all that love has done. Love did everything. "O how great is Thy goodness that Thou hast laid up, that Thou hast wrought out, for them that love Thee". O if you take hold of the immutable love of God it will enable you to bane the cross. It was the crowning virtue that we read of in the Romans, "We glory in tribulation also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, patience experience, experience hope and hope maketh not ashamed because the LOVE of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost that is given to us".

"O love divine, how swet thou art,
When shall I find my willing heart
All taken up by thee?"

O see what love has done! Paul took hold of it, it took hold of him, brought him to that persuasion that nothing could ever separate him from it. "Let him take hold of my strength", my immutable love, "That he may make peace with me". Not that a sinner can make peace with Christ, but when he takes hold of Christ's strength then that peace which passeth all understanding flows like a river into his soul.

Peace; it is a different peace from natural peace. Natural peace is dependent upon circumstances, whether it is in a nation or in a person only. Where there is disturbance, where there is conflict and war, then peace ceases. But the peace of God is unconditional. Nothing can disturb that peace, it is peace in the conscience. "I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely". Christ calls it His peace; "My peace I leave with you, not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled neither let it be afraid". Peace. It is the peace where warfare is accomplished, the victory is won. It is the peace of a conquerer. "Thanks be unto God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ". It is the peace of victory, it is the peace which comes through His gracious presence in the heart. I don't mind what comes upon you or where you might be, but when that peace comes into your heart and you are able so to take hold of Christ's strength, that peace will keep your heart and mind in the worst of conditions. It is the peace, too, of security.

Why look at this, "In that day sing ye unto her a vineyard of red wine, I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every moment lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day". It is the peace of divine security and protection. Safety is of the Lord. By that peace at times you will be able to lie down and sleep. Look how sweetly that peace is mentioned in the 4th Psalm, "Thou hast put gladness in my heart more than in the time that their corn and wine increased, I will both lay me down in peace and sleep, for Thou Lord only makest me dwell in safety".

O sacred peace ! an earnest of eternal peace, for whatever you receive from the Lord in your soul by the Spirit, it is perfection, it will not be a different peace in heaven from what you feel in your soul, but it will be to a greater degree.

"Let him take hold of my strength that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me". I will remove every hindrance, I will root up every brier, every thorn, I will pardon every sin. I will overcome every enemy and death at last. Sometimes you bring death before Him. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace".

Amen.

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