

Sermon preached by Mr F L Gosden at Galeed Chapel, Brighton
on Lord's Day morning 12th September 1965.

Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit. Jeremiah 17:7-8

There are some blessed and some solemn things revealed in this chapter; opposite things are contrasted: a "man that trusteth in man" (v. 5), and a 'man that trusteth in the Lord,' and the solemn condition of each of these characters. A solemn thing it is to trust in man and make flesh our arm or our strength (v. 5), and yet that is natural to us. "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils" (Is. 2 v. 22). "What is man?" said David, when he beheld the works of God, the sun and moon. "The heavens declare the glory of God" (Ps. 19 v. 1), and this gave David to see God in God's light and to see man in God's light. "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that Thou visitest him?" (Ps. 8 v. 4)

The Lord dealt very solemnly with Job. Job ceased from man, as did Micah. He said "The best of them is as a brier; the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge" (ch. 7 v. 4). The Lord is jealous, and in the opening of this chapter we read "The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond" (v. 1), not written as some people's conviction is written, like the writing on the sands – the next tide obliterates it. And if the Lord should write our sins "with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond," and engrave them upon the tables of our hearts, we shall not be able to forget it. We shall not be able to sing away that conviction, nor read it away. It is a mercy to be thus convinced of sin, and this is one way that the Lord will cause us to cease from man. But he that trusts in man and makes flesh his arm – "He shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh" (v. 6), a solemn condition, like that of the stony ground hearer; there is no depth of earth, and whatever you do with it, whatever attention you pay to it, there is no depth of earth, and no root. It will not respond to any good that comes; and so a man that turns away from God, whose hope God is not, whatever good comes to that man, whatever means of grace he is favoured with, whatever preaching of the Gospel, he does not see when good cometh - still withered, barren, lifeless.

But in the text there is this blessed man. 'Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.' This is not automatic; it is the result of divine teaching, the work of the Holy Ghost in the soul, and as we have sometimes said, the whole is experimental. 'Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.' Now that man has been brought to see the "end of all perfection" (Ps. 119 v. 96) in the flesh, to realise that outside of the Lord there is nothing to trust in. The world that "lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5 v. 19), and unregenerate man who neither knows God nor desires to know Him – the question of trust does not enter into his experience. He trusts in the worst thing there is: he trusts in himself, in his natural faculties, in his health and strength if he has it, in his ability and his gifts; and he that trusts in his own heart is a fool, for "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (v. 9) The man that knows it is the man whose heart the Lord has searched, and tried his reins (v. 10), and that is the experience that brings a man to trust in the Lord.

Some of you may be searching your own hearts as we, in our feeble way, go along. Do you sometimes hear or read the word of God and then look into your own heart and your own experience to see where you are, as to whether you are being taught by the Spirit; as, for instance, have you been taught that your “heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked”? Oh, this is real teaching, very solemn. It is a sickening sight when the Lord reveals ourselves and our deceitful and desperately wicked hearts to us. You will say, ‘It is true; it is true, Lord,’ and you will know it because your heart has deceived you, and that its wickedness is desperate, reckless. Sin is a reckless thing. To my mind, this is the way the Holy Spirit leads a man to trust in the Lord, and in a very real way, when one is brought to believe these things. It is not an opinion; he is *compelled* to believe them, for a man believes the truth by the Spirit. He is compelled to believe because nothing else will heal him, nothing else will save him. Are you here, and do you attend upon the truth because you are compelled to? In very sweet and simple language we have this point:

“Other refuge have I none.”

(C Wesley; Gadsby’s Sel. 303)

How do you know it? Because you have tried others. The woman with an issue of blood (Mk 5 v. 25-34) – she tried every kind of physician, she got worse rather than better, she was compelled to go to the Lord Jesus, and her case was such that it was no use for her to be on the fringe of that crowd that pressed upon Him – not a bit of good. She had to press through and touch Him. She was compelled to. Do you believe the truth because you are compelled to? Nothing else will reach your case, nothing but the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ can cleanse your soul and pardon your sin and bring you peace.

‘Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.’ I can endorse that declaration. Can you? Is it more than a mere verse in the Scriptures? Do you feel your heart can go out – “Remember me, O Lord, with the favour” (Ps. 106 v. 4)? For this trusting in the Lord is an act of God-given faith. No natural man can trust in the Lord. A natural faith cannot trust in Him. It may talk about Him, may read about Him, may preach about Him, may write about Him, but natural faith will never trust in the Lord. Oh, He will take the bottom out of everything else! He will give you to feel and believe (I can say it from sad, solemn experience) that you “sink in deep mire, where there is no standing” (Ps. 69 v. 2).

‘Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.’ Well, you take these two points, and see the blessedness of this man who trusts in the Lord. The Lord has something to do with you. *That* is really the blessedness, not in the first place that this man trusts in the Lord, but that he *has* the Lord to trust in. It is the relationship between the Lord and a man that trusts in Him. You take that word in Nahum: “The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in Him” (ch. 1 v. 7). It is a special kind of knowledge that He has of His people that trust in Him. And what is that kind of knowledge? Those of you who have a banking account can trust that bank with your money. How does the bank know that you trust in the bank? By what you deposit there. “The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in Him.” Why? They come to Him; they cast their cares upon Him (1 Pet. 5 v. 7); they seek unto Him and commit their way unto Him. They delight in His law, delight themselves in the Lord; they rest upon the Lord (Ps. 37 v. 4, 5, 7; Ps. 119 v. 70). That is how He knows that they trust in Him.

‘Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.’ The two things must go together. Trust is an act of faith, and hope and faith always go together. You will never trust in the Lord if you have no hope in Him; you will never hope in the Lord if you do not trust Him. ‘Blessed is the man.’ “Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God” (Ps. 146 v. 5). Therefore this seventh verse takes a man away from all human help. This hope and this faith raise him above the world and his things, above all human authority. That is the blessedness of ‘the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.’

‘For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters.’ This is the very opposite to the man that trusts in man. “He shall be like the heath in the desert”; and it does not matter where he is. What a solemn thing it is to have a soul destitute of life, destitute of grace, destitute of the fear of God, and yet to be in the midst of the means of grace, to be barren, dead and destitute, even in Zion, where God has promised to bless the provision of His house (Ps. 132 v. 15). But ‘the man that trusteth in the Lord ... shall be as a tree planted by the waters.’ They are called in Isaiah “Trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified” (ch. 61 v. 3). Everything of the work of grace in the heart glorifies the Lord Jesus. His people are His workmanship; they are his husbandry; they are His building. ‘He shall be as a tree planted by the waters.’ The apostle, speaking of this planting, says “If we have been planted in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection” (Rom. 6 v. 5), and this tree is planted into Christ Himself, Christ revealed in the gospel. The soil, the rich, deep soil in which these trees are planted, is the Gospel of His grace, the everlasting Gospel of the grace of God. Oh, blessed man! And the Holy Spirit’s work, if I might so speak, is in leading him beside these still waters, the experience of bringing him to see that there is no hope or help or salvation in any other. The contrast is blessed; it is solemn.

Well, can we say, can we feel (for real religion can be felt; the life of God in the soul in its movements can be felt) in our own hearts, that we are planted by the Lord, by the waters, not going to and fro like a door on its hinges? The roots of faith, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, strike down under a sense of need, and also of desire, and you will sometimes feel that inward, living response to the Gospel, and a definite sacred movement of your soul toward God, and realise that, as your body needs sustenance and nourishment and food, you as distinctly feel that you have a soul, a life within, that needs spiritual food, spiritual drink, spiritual life, living communications from heaven itself. You will live upon these things as well as your affections being set on things above. Now this man is said to be a blessed man, and some of you feel that you cannot claim anything at all, but I believe you can say this, ‘That is a blessed man.’ You envy him.

If you have - and some young people (I do not know what is in their hearts; they might have some thoughts which later on might prove to be the beginnings of a work of grace) –if you have some simple thoughts that draw you toward the things of God, do not cast them aside. I remember when I was a youth – I would not presume, but I do remember this - sitting in the chapel, when grace was made a real charming sound to my soul. I don’t know that I *possessed* grace then, but I felt this: if grace was contagious, I would sit near and close to one that had got it. I wanted grace, sovereign grace, which alone can abound over the abounding of sin. Well, you will realise a beginning of a planting by the waters. David knew it: “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green

pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters" (Ps. 23 v. 1-2). He prepares a soul by a sense of the utter wilderness and barrenness of all nature and created things, and opens the eyes to behold that good land. Balaam had a solemn sight of it. The Lord gave him a sight of the goodness of Israel. He saw their tents spread out by the river. A very solemn sight Balaam had of it, such a sight that he said "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his" (Num. 23 v. 10), but he was destitute of grace. What he wanted was all that this world could give him, but if there was some advantage that the children of God had, he would like to have that as well. But here is a blessed man who is emptied of self. We sing some truths, and I do feel that we need to be exercised in singing hymns, and to ask ourselves the question whether we can honestly sing them.

*"Emptied of earth I fain would be,
The world, myself, and all but Thee;
Only reserved for Christ that died,
Surrendered to the crucified."*

(A Toplady; Gadsby's Sel. 991)

It is a great thing to sing; but if you find some Scriptures appear to be far beyond you, and you feel sometimes you will never reach them, don't pass by them, my dear friends. Turn them into a prayer; turn them into a prayer. I have said, and will repeat it, that there is nothing throughout the whole of the Scriptures that forbids the worst of sinners praying for the greatest blessings that the Gospel has to give; there is not. You think of it, O you big sinners, you uttermost sinners, you abominable sinners! The Lord loves them; there is a lot in the Scriptures for their consolation. Seek all that heaven holds good, for the whole of the blessed Gospel is a provision for nobody but the chief of sinners!

'He shall be like a tree planted' – planted, room made for it, a place dug for it, and *planted*. Do you feel that a place has been dug out for you in the Gospel? What is the digging out for it? I believe one thing is this: there will be created

*"an aching void
The world can never fill."*

(W Cowper; Gadsby's Sel. 958)

If the Lord digs into your soul and makes that aching void, it will prepare you for the services of His house, and there will be times when you will have some distinct influence upon your spirit that you are planted in the Lord, rooted and grounded in the Gospel.

'And that spreadeth out her roots by the river.' Job speaks of this: "There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again ... yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs" (Job 14 v. 7, 9). You may get a scent of water (oh the sacred joys of heaven!), realise that the Lord Jesu's name which "is as ointment poured forth" (Song 1 v. 3), His love which is immutable, shed abroad in your heart, the redemption that is in Christ Jesus to redeem His people, and His righteousness to clothe them with that best robe – and your faith will get a scent of these sacred truths and run after them. When you follow after the Lord, you follow after something distinct that faith sees to be in Him, and yet can be communicated to you. That the whole of the contents of salvation, the benefits of Christ in the Gospel, are made available to poor dying sinners, dying men, is mightily attractive to faith.

‘And shall not see when heat cometh.’ You see the contrast between the cursed man (He “shall not see when good cometh” (v. 6)), and this blessed man (he ‘shall not see when heat cometh’). Why, the cursed man shall not benefit when good comes because he has got no root, no depth of earth; and why this blessed man does not see when heat cometh is because his roots go down deep and are not affected by the drought. The woman said to the Lord Jesus (she spoke a truth although she did not at that time know it), “Thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep,” (John 4 v. 11). The things of God in the Gospel are deep, but the Holy Ghost reveals the deep things of God, and faith goes down, goes down beneath the surface. So that he ‘shall not see when heat cometh.’ Nothing can wither the things of God, the things of God in your heart, “things that accompany salvation” (Heb. 6 v. 9). The work of grace is of the exact same nature as that that will be enjoyed in heaven, “incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away” (1 Pet. 1 v. 4), and that is true of everything that the Holy Ghost does in the soul; it is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away. Oh, blessed man! He is a blessed man that has such a root, such a life, such a God, such a Gospel, such a salvation, and such a hope of eternal glory.

‘And shall not see when heat cometh; but her leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of drought.’ I know this causes much searching of heart. O my friends, we fail, we wither. *Grace* does not; *we* do, and we shall live to prove that all our springs are in God (Ps. 87 v. 7). We have nothing in a way of salvation as to the source of it in ourselves, and we shall prove that. The source, the fountain, is in God. ‘Her leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.’ I know when we come to consider this part of the text it will cause us much misgiving. If what we have said about the former part of the text is true, and then we are brought to see our backslidings, how often we are withered, how often we go to the Word of God and have no appetite for it, how often we find our religion is covered with mildew, and how the locusts and the caterpillar seem to have eaten up everything green within, what are we to say about it? Does it contradict the text – ‘shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green’? Mr Hart speaks a truth concerning this Scripture:

*“If aught there dark appear,
Bewail thy want of sight;
No imperfection can be there,
For all God’s words are right,”*

(J Hart; Gadsby’s Sel. 878)

and therefore the work of grace in the heart can never wither. If things become stale, oh what a shame it is to us that ever the Word of God can become stale. The staleness is not in the Word; it is in us. I have thought it wonderful that in the prayer of Solomon at the dedication of the temple, where he anticipated all kinds of cases and prayers, among them was this: “If there be blasting, or mildew, locusts, or caterpillars” (2 Chron. 6 v. 28). Ah, we cannot bring these things to the Lord to *claim* anything from Him. If we bring them to Him, we bring them covered with shame and confusion of face. But this is the point: *grace* never withers, and what the Lord has done is done for ever. We need to hold that fast, my friends; otherwise we should attribute our witherings and our staleness, our stagnation and our unfruitfulness, to the Spirit of God. Blessed be His name, the work of grace can never wither. Grace, though it comes to contamination, can never itself be contaminated; that is a beautiful truth. I have thought of it, and oh, how unworthy you feel that those “things that accompany salvation,” those purposes and decrees of God for the good of His people in the

covenant of grace, the highest glory of heaven, the holy, harmless, sinless Lamb of God, all the glories of heaven and the perfections of Jehovah, come into the vilest cess-pool of human depravity, and yet none of them can be contaminated or affected, but can deliver and cleanse the unclean. Oh, he is a blessed man that is rooted and grounded in this Gospel!

'Shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.' So far as the outward means of grace is concerned, there is no drought, but the Lord reminds His people in this prophecy: "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown" (Jer. 2 v. 2). There have been places and times when the Lord's people have been removed from the means of grace altogether. Some of you have, it may be, in the providence of God. I believe that the Lord's people, especially those that went abroad in the first war, were in a land that was not sown with anything at all, except to possess a Bible. There were no Bibles to be seen, no worship, no mention of the name of God, no prayer. Now this is the point in the text, 'shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither cease from yielding fruit.' Oh, what a mercy to have a religion that will live in the Sahara desert! We are much influenced by public worship; we meet together, and there is a certain influence, a social influence, which is very sweet. The fellowship and communion of the saints is very sweet; but if you were completely alone, and nobody saw you to know you, would you pray? Would you take a delight in the Word of God? Would you always call upon His name? That would be a test. Public worship has an influence, and it is very sweet, but if we have the root of the matter in our souls we have a religion that would live when nobody was looking. A Pharisee's religion only lives while people are looking; he prays to be heard and seen; but oh, what a solemn thing it is to have a religion like that!

'Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.' Have you a hope? Paul says "We are saved by hope, but hope that is seen is not hope, for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it" (Rom. 8 v. 24-5). And there will always be a vision: "The vision is yet for an appointed time; though it tarry, wait for it" (Hab. 2 v. 3). The vision that those Old Testament saints waited for was the Messiah. He was prophesied; He was promised. The vision that some of you may be waiting for is a manifestation of Christ in your souls as your Saviour, to reveal Him and His truth, for Him to put forth his firm and friendly hand of grace and take hold of you and bring you in. And there is another vision which is for an appointed time; that is, to see Christ as He is and behold His glory. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God. It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3 v. 1-2). This is the end of faith; this is the hope that is set before us in the Gospel.

Amen.

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