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# BEARING GOD'S INDIGNATION

by

MR F L GOSDEN

SERMON

*Preached at Ebenezer Chapel, Clapham, on Sunday evening, November 21<sup>st</sup>, 1937.*

**Text: Micah 7 v. 9**

**I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him, until He plead my cause, and execute judgment for me: He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold His righteousness.**

The eighth<sup>1</sup> and the ninth verses give the attitude, the direction of faith; in one case with respect to the enemies of the soul, in the other case as before God.

No doubt there may be some of you here this evening who fain would find rest for your souls. There are still many weary pilgrims in the earth who do not sail down the stream with the wind; there are still those, though perhaps few, who wrestle on toward heaven against wind and storm and tide. Oh, you know something of the strength of the enemies; you have not been left to underrate them; salvation has become to you everything – and salvation *is* either everything or nothing. With respect to the solemn things of eternity, there is no neutral ground; the carnal heart ever seeks for it. It is what the religious world is trying to find, and ever did try to find, this neutral ground to stand on. You will never find it. There is none. The abominable doctrine of purgatory is an attempt to find neutral ground to stand upon. We are either lost or saved; salvation is either everything to us or it is nothing.

If the Lord in His mercy is leading us forth by the right way to a city of habitation<sup>2</sup>, I believe He is leading us in the way I have been feebly trying to set forth<sup>3</sup> – the path of tribulation. You know the strength of these enemies; they are mighty. As we said this morning, there is only one power greater, and that is the power of God. The power of the world, the flesh and the devil are mighty foes, but there are times when the child of God is enabled to lift up his head and say unto his enemies, “Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy” (v. 8). You will remember that in the days of Joshua, when the five kings besieged Israel, and God gave Israel the victory, that those five kings fled and hid themselves in a cave, and Joshua commanded his men to bring them out before the people, and commanded Israel to put their feet upon the necks of those five kings.<sup>4</sup> And sometimes the Lord enables His people to put their feet upon the necks of their enemies. I believe some of you have known it; sometimes perhaps, under the ministry, those five kings have been dragged out from their cave, and you have looked upon those enemies, those enemies that have desolated your soul, that have thrown you down and entangled you; you have seen *them* captive that have taken *you*, at times, captive, and have been brought out under the Word as you have been sitting listening to the gospel. And the Lord has enabled you to look at these things, to

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<sup>1</sup> Verse 8 reads: “Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me.”

<sup>2</sup> “He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation” (Ps. 107 v. 7).

<sup>3</sup> See the morning sermon, published in Mr Gosden’s biography.

<sup>4</sup> Joshua 10 v. 5 – 24.

lift up your heads, poor oppressed people, and see these things dragged out – the world, the flesh, and the devil, unbelief and infidelity, all under control – and you have had your foot upon their necks for the time being, and at such a time you have been helped through and enabled to say,

“Yes, I to the end shall endure”

(Toplady: Gadsby’s 340).

It is when the light comes, and the Lord comes and has been a light unto you, and has said unto you, “Thine expectation shall not be cut off” (Prov. 23 v. 18; 24 v. 14). He has given you a little hope that He has gone to prepare a place for *you*, and that He is preparing you for that place. “Great is the mystery of godliness” (1 Tim. 3 v. 16), not only in the incarnation of the Son of God, but in the blessed experience of it in the people of God. It is a great mystery.

The Lord’s people are heirs to an incorruptible inheritance – heirs of God, my friends, heirs of God Himself, joint heirs with Christ! To all that Christ is heir, His people are joint heirs with Him. Think of it! But it has not pleased the Lord that the heirs of such an estate should have the inheritance here. A rest remains - not inherited here, but it *remains*. Here the promise is, “In the world ye shall have tribulation” (John 16 v. 33). Yet we look for anything else but tribulation. The Apostle Peter says, “Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you” (1 Peter 4 v. 12); but we *do* think it strange. If we were given more faith to consider our great High Priest, made perfect through sufferings, we should be willing to suffer.

“Thus make me willing, glorious Lamb,  
To suffer all things for Thy name;  
At last be where my Jesus is,  
And rise to everlasting bliss.

(Burnham; Gadsby’s 771)

That is the end of it. Rutherford said,

“It were a well-spent journey,  
Though seven deaths lay between.”

(Anne Cousins: The last words of Samuel Rutherford.)

“I will bear the indignation of the Lord.” This word “bear” has a lot in it. “I will bear the indignation of the Lord.” It isn’t that a man will say, ‘These troubles have come upon me; I must put up with it, and I will put a good face on it.’ But this means, ‘I will accept; I would not get rid of it; I would not have a thing altered. If the Lord has expressed His indignation in the family or the body, I will receive it.’ Have you ever received the indignation of the Lord when your sin has been discovered to you? The Lord shows the people here the controversy<sup>5</sup> He had with them, and if after the Lord has dealt with you, and has brought His judgments to bear upon you, you have rebelled and your conscience has remained hard, and not acknowledged the lifting up of His hand, He has brought you into a dry, fruitless, shameful, lean condition. If the Lord comes into that, in a way of love and mercy, and begins to plead with you, it will break your heart. In the sixth chapter [of Micah] He says, “O my people, what have I done unto thee?” If He should come to you, if He *has* come to you in some of your backslidings, when you have carried yourself by your sins into the end of the earth, and His smiting you has been ineffective, His north wind has not produced that repentance in your heart; if in mercy to you He has come and caused His south wind to blow, it will break your heart. If He says to you, “O my people, what have I done unto thee? And wherein have I wearied thee? Testify against me” (v. 3), what would you answer Him?

“For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.” He reminds you of the beginning, that He did not leave you in Egypt, and where you deserved to be. “I brought thee up.” He will take you back and cause you to look at the hole of the pit whence He dug you.<sup>6</sup> “For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee

<sup>5</sup> “The Lord hath a controversy with His people” (Mic. 6 v. 2).

<sup>6</sup> “Look unto ... the hole of the pit whence ye are digged” (Isa. 51 v. 1).

Moses and Aaron and Miriam.” (v. 4) He will set before you your privileges – how many sermons you have heard, where your lot has been cast – and He will show you your leanness notwithstanding all His kindness to you.

“O my people, remember now what Balak, king of Moab, consulted” (v. 5): ‘He was to curse you; I turned the curse into a blessing; I did not allow it.’ If the Lord comes and holds a controversy like this with you, He comes later and says, “I remember thee.” Think of it! Perhaps He has come to you when you have treated Him unkindly and become most unfruitful, bringing forth little if any fruit to His honour and glory. And if He should come to you and say, “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), it will produce this: “I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him.”

My friends, is the gospel effective in you? It is a solemn word in the Scripture, “If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost” (2 Cor. 4 v. 3). The definiteness of the Scripture is most blessed and solemn. The curse of death is definite; the blessings of life are definite. We shall have no excuse at the end, no excuse whatever, my friends. We have the Scriptures in our hands; the Lord the Holy Ghost has given this inspired Word, and it is sufficient to thoroughly furnish a man unto all good works<sup>7</sup>; we shall have nothing to say at the end. But oh, to be brought to this, “I will bear the indignation of the Lord.” It is a recognition of sin in trouble, and it is well to be brought to this. Have you ever, in any affliction or trouble, been brought to recognise sin and receive the trouble? Have you ever been given grace to refuse relief from trouble? I remember once fearing relief from trouble when I saw relief coming after a state of some rebellion. “I will bear the indignation.” I will accept it; I will receive it; I will bear it. That is a sweet place; the Lord alone can bring you to it, and if He holds a controversy with you, He will bring you to it. I wish I could live there. There is liberty there, my friends. In whatever way the Lord may be showing His indignation, there will be grace to bow to it. Oh, to see more hearts bowed to it, not faces marred to appear unto men to mourn, but hearts bowed in secret before God! I know no more sacred experience than such communion with God; it seems as though the graces of the Spirit vie with each other as to which shall be first – repentance, submission, love. The apostle speaks of it to the Corinthians: describing their godly sorrow, he says, “What carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, ... yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal!” (2 Cor. 7 v. 11). Do you know this effect? Not clearing of yourself by way of excuse, but a clearing by baring the breast, as though when He has a controversy with you, you have opened it all. ‘Any more, Lord? Search as Thou canst; leave nothing there; find my last sin!’ What a clearing there is of oneself in secret sometimes, what zeal for His honour and glory, what vehement desire! And this is the work of the Holy Ghost. A blessed pathway, this! This is the pathway “the vulture’s eye hath not seen” (Job 28 v. 7). It is a path in which people are deeply wounded, and no slight healing<sup>8</sup> will do. It is a bleeding conscience, a conscience it will be a pain to touch – do you know it? Have you ever been afraid of moving from where you are under a sense of a tender conscience before God, lest it should be contaminated?

“I will bear the indignation of the Lord.” Are any of you under His indignation now, bearing it? The Lord knows where to touch His people. I remember a godly, tried, suffering pilgrim under the indignation of God: trouble in the family, ill in bed; one of the sons, out all night – a wayward son - came back and packed up his goods and said, ‘I can do without you, Mother.’ The Lord knows where to touch His people; ‘I will bear it.’

“I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him.” Faith and hope, as we said this morning, never fail. While the Lord holds this controversy with His people,

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<sup>7</sup>“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3 v. 16-7).

<sup>8</sup> See Jer. 6 v. 14 “They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.”

He lends an unseen hand. He strengthens faith secretly, and increases hope. He knows the balancing of the clouds; there is no confusion with Him there, my friends. He weighs out your sorrows; He balances things; He will never lay upon man more than he can bear; He will always make a way of escape.

“... until He plead my cause.” He is in heaven. He entered heaven with his own blood. He has the victory. He is the Captain of our salvation. He is the Mediator between God and man. He is the High Priest, the Altar, All in all, and one says,

“Give Him, my soul, thy cause to plead”

(Watts; Gadsby's 121).

“... until He plead my cause and execute judgment for me.” Oh, may He give us a sight of that blessed Mediator in heaven!

“A Man there is, a real Man,  
With wounds still gaping wide.”

(Hart; Gadsby's 23)

We shall have to draw all our virtue from Him; all our strength must come from Him. This person who is bowed before Him, bearing the indignation of the Lord, is given at times a glimpse of “the King in His beauty” and “the land that is very far off” (Isa. 33 v. 17). He pleads the cause in the conscience, and one is enabled to say, ‘My righteousness is in heaven,’ and in the midst of tribulation there is at times faith to rise. It is not so much putting crooked things straight; the end is in view; the prize is in view. Then one is enabled to “forget those things which are behind” (Phil. 3 v. 13) – not forgetting the sins. (But everything this side of heaven is ‘behind,’ even if yet to come, because it is passing.) The Psalmist says, “Hold up my goings” (Ps. 17 v. 5). It is a continual movement:

“We've no abiding city here”

(Kelly; Gadsby's 1048).

and this soul that is sitting down in discipline is moved on – there is a going forward, a growth in grace. Grace is not a stagnant thing, to remain still; it is always active. We are either growing in grace or backsliding – think of *that!* The condition of the soul is like a thermometer, and you can judge a good deal as to your state and condition, by secret prayer. It is a pulse; you can feel the condition of your soul by what you are in secret before God. A growth in grace is this: “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3 v. 30); and this pathway will bring this about.

There was a time in experience, before the Lord had made some of our beauty to consume away, when our religion was judged by additions; but much has to be burnt up – wood, hay and stubble; that was not a laying of the foundation, but a quick building, and the Lord lights a fire under it. But if in this way we stand before Him to receive His chastisement, He will send a stream from that River with just that ingredient in it that will suit your case. The Lord knows your needs and He will plead your cause; He will plead it in heaven, and clear your conscience. He will make “intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Rom. 8 v. 26), and you will do business in secret with God. Do you know this? Has He ever pleaded your cause while in prayer? It is not an idle life; faith is not given to sleep with; there is the fight of faith, the labour of faith, the life of faith.

“I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against Him, until He plead my cause, and execute judgment for me.” And He will put matters straight. You will be enabled to leave it with Him. Whatever the indignation is for, He has manifested it to you. He will execute judgment when He has brought about in you His will, and that is your sanctification. Then He will execute judgment, and there will be a good clearing in your conscience, and you will be enabled to stand before Him and say, ‘I'm clean, just God, I'm clean.’

“He will bring me forth to the light.” He will make it manifest that it is His work; it will have His seal upon it, and He will bring you forth to the light of His countenance. There will be reconciliation. Oh, the blessedness of reconciliation! There will be the fulfilment of some of

those desires of which David spoke: “He restoreth my soul” (Ps. 23 v. 3); He “redeemeth my life from destruction,”<sup>9</sup> and you will behold it and have the experience of it in your soul. Do you know these changes, my friends, these ups and downs? Do you know anything of the 107<sup>th</sup> Psalm? Oh, when the Lord deals with us there will be a breaking up. What a lot of fallow ground there is! It does not matter what seed is cast upon it. You remember in the parable of the Sower, there was nothing wrong with the seed, but the ground was wrong, and the Lord will break it up. This is a work of grace, a blessed change in the life of faith. He will bring His people into such circumstances that they can do nothing; He won’t allow them to walk by sight; they shall walk by faith. And oh, blessed be His name, He leads the blind by a way they knew not. He knows the end from the beginning. Oh, you who are walking in the midst of trouble, feeling overwhelmed in it, the Lord will be a light unto you. He has all in His hands; you will say some day, “What manner of Man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him” (Mat. 8 v. 27)?

It is a great thing to know God. You take God out of the life of David, take God out of some of those Psalms and those troubles, and what would be left? Desolation and despair. Take God out of some of your lives and troubles, and what would be left? But He will plead your cause.

“With cries and tears He offered up  
His humble suit below;  
But with authority He asks,  
Enthroned in glory now.

(Toplady; Gadsby’s 117)

He can both plead the cause and execute judgment.

“And He will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold His righteousness.” What a thing it will be to get to heaven! Is there anything here below that would hang you back? If you were in the field, would you turn back to get your coat, as it speaks in the gospel? Or would you say, “I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness” (Ps. 17 v. 15)? “I shall behold thy righteousness.” Shall we behold it?

“When Thou, my righteous Judge, shalt come  
To take Thy ransomed people home,  
Shall I among them stand?”

(Gadsby’s 938, from Rippons Colln.)

You get a little of this grace in your heart, my friend, and there will be nothing here worth living for.

One more enemy to speak about, and I have left that to the last, and that is the last enemy. Death! If you belittle that now, you won’t when you meet it. It is solemn to die. It is solemn even for a saint to die, exceedingly solemn. Death is solemn – it is the enemy. How are you going to say to that enemy, “Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy”? It has a sting, and it has a victory. The grave has a victory, and it has a sting. Sin is its victory, and sin is its sting. It has a victory over some, an eternal victory. How will you say to that enemy, “Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy”? Only one way – by this blessed Man pleading your cause. “Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” It enables you to look at death through Christ, and say, “O grave, where is thy victory?” It *had* one, but where is it? Christ has got the victory. “O death, where is thy sting?” (1 Cor. 15 v. 55, 57) The blood of Christ has taken it out. If you have walked here and known something of the victories, leaning on thy Beloved, you will come up out of the wilderness at last, leaning on thy Beloved<sup>10</sup>, on the same righteousness, and you will be able to say to the last enemy, “Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy.” Where is your victory?

<sup>9</sup> “Bless the Lord, O my soul ... who redeemeth thy life from destruction” (v. 2-4)

<sup>10</sup> “Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?” (Song 8 v. 5).

“We too, amid the sacred throng,  
Low at His feet would fall.  
Join in the everlasting song,  
And crown Him Lord of all.”

(E Perronet; Gadshy's 730)

May you be brought there, for His name's sake.

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