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Sermon preached by Mr F L Gosden at Galeed Chapel, Brighton,
on Lord's Day morning 3rd July 1960

The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble: and He knoweth them that trust in
Him. Nahum 1 v. 7

This Scripture sets before troubled people a good God as the Object of their faith and trust.
What a mercy it is to have a God-given faith, whose Object and End is Himself; and blessed
is that man who can truly say,

"Other refuge have I none."

And not only so, but

"Hangs my helpless soul on Thee."

(C. Wesley; Gadsby's 303)

Therefore, in the first place, as enabled, we would try and speak of this good Lord. It
is Jehovah, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, that is good. Would any of us, in our deepest
troubles, say He is not good? You take the 107th Psalm; every one of them was in trouble,
and yet throughout the whole of their troubles in the wilderness they constantly ascribe
praises unto the Lord, for He is good.

But the goodness of the Lord, in the first place, is not what He does or what He
bestows, but what He is; and that is a very great and comfortable truth, because it does lay
such a blessed foundation beneath the feet of a poor saint of God, a troubled sinner. God is
good because He is perfection. Goodness in its most absolute form is perfection, perfection
which is *infinite* perfection, and it makes God exceedingly glorious in His infinite Being; and
some of you may have felt a mysterious and sacred experience, that while He is
incomprehensible, yet by the Spirit, as He is seen in Christ, His infinite Being is a real
attraction to faith. He is forbidding out of Christ, "a consuming fire" (Deut. 4 v. 24; Heb. 12 v. 29). He
is. His perfection, His holiness, His justice, are such that we would flee from Him were it not
that He has made Himself knowable in His incarnate Son, and that as His divine perfections
meet there, those perfections, which are a consuming fire out of Christ, become a refuge
and a defence, a sanctuary, a hiding-place, as theirs in Christ. So that this goodness of the
Lord is what He is essentially in His infinite Being. Do you feel, poor sinner, a rest in Him?
He is "glorious in holiness, fearful in praises" (Ex. 15 v. 11), and yet can you not join with the
hymnwriter (A. Toplady; Gadsby's 940)? I would not wish His holiness, I would not wish Him in His
infinite Being, less than, or other than, He is.

'The Lord is good.' The divine eternal Father is good. He is good in sovereign
election. It expresses His divine, perfect sovereignty. It involves His infinite mind, His
foreknowledge of His people. It is an expression of His everlasting love set upon His people
from eternity. Oh love divine, flowing from its eternal source, God the Father! And it is
immutable love, and that is a part of its goodness and perfection, unchanging itself,
notwithstanding the changes in His people, their provocations, their backslidings,
notwithstanding their ruin in the fall. Yet, says Paul (and oh, I have coveted to be brought to
that blessed persuasion by the love of God being shed abroad in my poor heart), "I am
persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, not powers, nor things
present, nor things to come ... nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the
love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 9 v. 38-9). He is good, perfect, immutable.
With Him there "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (Jas. 1 v. 17). What a great thing
it is to know Him!

'The Lord is good' – good in the covenant of grace, "ordered in all things, and sure" (2 Sam. 23 v. 5), that is for His people. Oh, what eternal decrees, what purposes, what counsels were established by Jehovah in the covenant of grace before the world began! Oh, look at that most beautiful, majestic chapter, the 8th of Proverbs, where the Lord Jesus declares His eternal Sonship, and His offices and relationships and characters in the Church, where He was "set up from everlasting, or ever the earth was" (v. 23)! But the Lord Jesus is good because He is God's co-equal eternal Son – He is God.

He is good, too, in His condescension, because He did not change, and yet took into union with His divine Person human nature. Oh the goodness of the Son! Good, too, because "it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell" (Col. 1 v. 19), should be concentrated in Him, all the fulness that the Church should need, and every individual of the Church – all eternal life, all sovereign grace, reigning grace, regenerating grace, all infinite merit, all power, unsearchable riches, sanctification, worthiness, all in the Lord Jesus in the perfection of it. The Lord is good because of what He is.

He is good, too, in the covenant of grace, because His people were there, given there to His Son, and the covenant was ordered in all things connected with their lives. Their providences were in the covenant of grace: the way that they should take, the sorrows they should bear, as we were singing:

*"Our sorrows in the scales He weighs,
And measures out our pains."*

(J. Swain; Gadsby's 132)

Oh, what a Lord He is!

The Holy Ghost is good. David said so, and he saw such perfection in the Lord as to pray "Teach me to do Thy will; for Thou art my God: Thy Spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness" (Ps. 143 v. 10). The Holy Ghost is good because He is God, and therefore, being what He is, He is invaluable, eternal, and therefore His work is an invaluable and eternal work. Oh how good is the blessed Spirit, good because He is perfect! Therefore the Scriptures are good, given by inspiration, the work of the Holy Spirit. He is good too in regenerating sinners: "And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2 v. 1). He is good – invaluable - in His divine teaching in the heart, good in the communications he makes as He takes of the things of Christ and reveals them to poor sinners (John 16 v. 15), and that salvation that Christ finished in the souls of His disciples.

'The Lord is good' because He is what He is. Do you feel it, poor sinner? Do you feel a little of that fountain in your poor trembling soul? What else is there? And with what majesty and beauty David commences the 46th Psalm: "God is our refuge and strength" (v. 1). It is the same as Paul commences the Epistle to the Hebrews: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son" (Heb. 1 v. 1). Nothing preceded that eternal Name, God. I have admired it in the Hebrews and in the 46th Psalm. Nothing precedes it: God, our Refuge and Strength; and sometimes that Name is made sacred in poor trembling sinners' hearts, and it grows as the Spirit reveals Him, so that He fills heaven and earth to a poor sinner, to believe what we sang just now:

*"With heaven and earth at His command,
He waits to answer prayer."*

(J. Swain; Gadsby's 132)

'The Lord is good.' He is good to His people in what He bestows upon them and what He does for them, and you will see that this is a very blessed order. If God was one

who was merely good as man may be, good in what He can give and bestow and do, there would be no glory in it, and nothing to rest upon; but when we view it as it really is, that all the goodness and virtue and eternity of His blessings and His favours derives from what He is, how glorious He is, and what an object for faith, and what a foundation for hope, and what a sweet rest to the weary, what comfort to those that are in trouble! Oh, cannot some of you say 'The Lord is good'? I have said it years ago in deep trouble. And when you thus see Him, you can say 'Lord, Let Thy judgments help me.' It is easy for people to say 'Lord, let Thy mercies help me; let Thy comforts help me.' But oh, to come to judgments and say 'Lord, let *them* do me good; may there be teaching and instruction in trial and chastening'!

'The Lord is good, a strength¹ in the day of trouble.' As we have considered His goodness, you will readily realise that this strength is for the day of trouble. There are many days of trouble. Job says "Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward" (ch. 5 v. 7). We should not have trouble if we could have our own way. I should not either have a pain, or loss, or trouble, or cross, or disappointment of any kind; neither would anyone else. Oh, but we have to learn the lesson that Jeremiah learned! "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his step" (Jer. 10 v. 23). A great, lifelong lesson to learn! But man isn't *created* unto trouble, but *born* to it. Trouble isn't the work of God; death isn't the work of God; but they are the result of sin, and therefore we must have trouble. But the Lord does sanctify it and bring good out of it. I have thought much, in connection with this text, of the 107th Psalm. 'Oh,' carnal man would say, 'I should consider that the Lord would be good, seeing that He is mighty, if He saw to it that His people had no trouble at all. That would appear to me to be better goodness.' But have not some of you been taught better, and to profit? And how does the Lord teach His people to profit but in their experience?

This brings us to experimental religion. Notions, doctrines in the head, are of no avail when we come into trouble.

*"We must not learn God's truth
As schoolboys learn their task;
Such knowledge is not proof
Against delusion's blast."*

(W Gadsby; Gadsby's 618)

And it is no proof either against trouble. But oh, see this good Lord in His sovereignty permeating all things amongst those pilgrims in the 107th Psalm and in the 11th of Hebrews, of those worthies. See Him, too, in His goodness to Job, whom He afflicted, deserted, bereaved, stripped; yet, said Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him" (Job 13 v. 15). Notwithstanding his desertions, Job did not seek to flee from Him, but rather, "O that I knew where I might find" that God. Job's wife said "Curse God, and die" (Job 2 v. 9). That is what human nature would say in trouble, but faith says "O that I knew where I might find Him!" (Job 23 v. 3)

'A strength in the day of trouble.' There are many kinds of trouble, but they may be divided into two kinds, internal and external trouble; and, as I judge, internal soul trouble is the heavier. A day of conviction of sin is a day of trouble. When the law of God enters into the conscience of a man, and sin revives, and he dies (Rom. 7 v. 9), it is a day of trouble. It is called in the 30th of Jeremiah "Jacob's trouble," with a promise attached to it: "He shall be saved out of it" (v. 7). But it is a solemn day when one is made a sinner, that is to say, when the Holy Ghost by conviction discovers to a man that he is a sinner, when he dies to all hope

¹ "strength" – marginal reading for "strong hold."

in himself, and is brought to see the “end of all perfection” (Ps. 119 v. 96) in the flesh, when what he thought was life he sees to be death. Where he once sought happiness he finds misery; when there is a sentence of death throughout his whole being it is a day of trouble like which no other day can compare. But the Lord saves His people out of it. Oh, what a strength is Christ in that day of trouble, when there is set before a sinner “the Hope of Israel” (Acts 28 v 20), set before him the righteousness of the Lord Jesus which alone can justify, the precious sin-atonement blood of Christ, infinite in its merit, deriving from His Person and from His perfect sinless humanity and His holy life! And see it there as a substitute! The substitutionary nature of the Person and work of Immanuel is a comfort to a sinner. To see it only would do us no good, but for the Holy Spirit to take of that fulness that is in Christ, and bring it into our hearts, to make an eternal union between our poor souls and incarnate Deity, is a wonder of grace. And sometimes the truth is so attractive that it draws us and brings us even into the King’s chamber (Song 1 v. 4). Oh to lose ourselves, that is, in Christ, and for the world and its vanities and vicissitudes to be eclipsed in the beauty of Immanuel, for the world to be put beneath our feet, is a strength to a poor seeking, self-destroyed, self-condemned sinner! A mercy if we can die on that foundation that Mote found:

*“My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness!”* (E Mote; Gadsby’s 1106)

It is a day of trouble, too, in experience, when the Lord hides His face, when we are under a sense of soul darkness and desertion. A very solemn day of trouble that is! “By night on my bed,” said the spouse, “I sought Him whom my soul loveth: I sought Him, but I found Him not” (Song 3 v. 1). But a mercy it is to be possessed of a life that nothing can kill, and therefore of a faith that

*“lives and labours under load;
Though damped, it never dies.”* (J Hart; Gadsby’s 236)

Oh, that is the preciousness of union with Christ, to be partakers of, and blessed with, “spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1 v. 3)! Oh, these things will hold the soul when in a sense of desertion and darkness. It will enable a poor sinner to trust Him where he cannot trace Him, give him to see not only His goings in the sanctuary (Ps. 68 v. 24), in the midst of the provision of God’s house (Ps. 132 v. 15), not only to trace His goings as He manifests Himself through the blessed Gospel under the preaching of the Word, but also to see His goings in the sea and in the storm and in the mighty waters and great deeps. “The Lord is good” wherever He is; nothing can alter Him. No, “God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man that He should repent” (Num. 23 v. 19). Divine immutability and faithfulness is a strength for faith. Do not some of you really feel that if you had not this strength, then you must sink to rise no more?

‘The Lord is good ... in the day of trouble.’ But there are providential troubles, and the Lord uses these for His people’s good. They are in the covenant of grace. It is a grand truth that we sing:

*“Sovereign Ruler of the skies,
Ever gracious, ever wise;
All my times are in Thy hand,
All events at Thy command.”* (J Ryland; Gadsby’s 64)

What a comfort to feel the truth and support of it in our hearts! And that word “all” is very significant. It means what it says. “We know that *all* things work together for good to them

that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8 v. 28). But the Lord has promised. He said to His disciples, “These things have I spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16 v. 33). It is “through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom” (Acts 14 v. 22). Some of you can understand me when I say, in looking back at my little life I have found more teaching, and have been brought to know more who the Lord is, in a pathway of tribulation and trouble than in any other way. He does teach to profit (Is. 48 v. 17). There is a teaching which is not to profit. It is a mere logical knowledge of the truth, which is of the letter of the truth, to read the Word of God and the histories of it as we should read the history of England. Oh, how many thousands read the Bible like that! It makes no difference to them. They read of the Lord Jesus, believe it in the letter, and know nothing of Him in the power, know nothing of the need of Him.

But ‘The Lord is good, and a strength in the day of trouble’ – and the day of trouble sometimes comes to us in our families. We have this taken in in the Scriptures. I believe the Word of God comes to every condition that His people shall meet with. That woman that had a daughter grievously vexed with a devil – that must have been a very trying case for that mother. You have one in your home that is grievously vexed with the devil. But she went to the Lord. Oh His wisdom! He deals with His people as they have need. “He answered her not a word.” Was He good? He was good. A man ignorant of God and destitute of faith would have said, ‘Well, it is just an evidence of unkindness.’ “He answered her not a word.” And when He did answer her, He spoke to her in such a way as to almost reduce her to despair. ‘It isn’t meet to take of the children’s bread and cast it to a dog like you.’ How many of us would bear with it? Oh the faith in her heart! “Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.” She came and worshipped Him, saying “Lord, help me.” (Mat. 15 v. 22-8) Oh, it was an overcoming faith that, in the love of God, struggled toward Him! It is a wrestling faith, and the mercy of it is that God, by His Spirit, wrestles not *against* the sinner, but *with* him, and puts strength into him.

Now do not some of these blessed truths constitute a strength in your troubled hearts? What would you do without Him, poor sinner? And doesn’t it bring a sense of His love into your heart and out of your heart to Him? He is good. Yes, and, looking back, whatever your way has been, if you are possessed of “like precious faith” (2 Pet. 1 v. 1), you will join with this cry: “He hath done all things well” (Mk. 7 v. 37).

Oh, I have been thankful for the blessed record of those that have gone before in the wilderness! What a sacred volume this is! Oh the wisdom, goodness, grace and power of God manifested in it! “These all died in faith” (Heb. 11 v. 13). All were led safely to the city of habitation, and it is very wonderful. I sometimes feel it as I stand before the people, to see a few people sitting before the Lord, asking their way to heaven with their faces thither ward (Jer. 50 v. 5), a flowing together to His goodness. There is nothing to be compared with it. Oh, I could join this morning, before I came here, with Moses: “Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord?” (Deut. 33 v. 29)

And His goodness in His promises - what a strength are His promises, because they are yea and Amen in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 1 v. 20), as, for instance, “Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him” (Is. 3 v. 10). To the captives when they went down to Babylon for seventy years’ captivity, He sends a message: “I know the thoughts that I think toward you, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end” (Jer. 29 v. 11), whereas all they could see was their captors and captivity. Oh, the Lord can penetrate our prisons. “Turn ye to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope” (Zech. 9 v. 12)!

'The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble.' The day of bereavement is a day of trouble. Oh but there is a strong hold there! I remember when my own dear mother died. I was with her, and as she expired in peace, this word came into my heart: "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?" (Song 8 v. 5) O my friends, it is perhaps the bitterest cup, but oh, a sweetness can be put into it, and it is that something secret, it is that truth, which so comes into the bitter waters of Marah; it will sweeten it and enable you to say 'The Lord is good.' Whatever He does is good, and whatever He is. He is a strong hold, and your little faith goes out to Him – 'a strong hold in the day of trouble.'

'And He knoweth them that trust in Him,' so that He is the object of trust. To trust in Him is an act of faith. And in the first place, as His goodness is what He is, so faith trusts in what He is first. Why, I am sure there are those here who could not trust Him except that, by the Spirit, you know in some measure what and who He is, and that makes His word what it is – a firm foundation. But to trust in Him is to *bring everything* to Him, to cast your burden upon the Lord, to commit your way unto Him, trust also in Him to bring it – every "it," your "it," my "it" – "to bring it to pass" (Ps. 37 v. 5); and there is no "it" that He cannot bring to pass. But it is a great comfort to truly trust in Him. Jeremiah did when he was in deep trouble, in the court of the prison; when the city was about to be reduced to ashes by the Chaldeans; the Lord said "I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for Me?" (Jer. 32 v. 27) Therefore says the Lord, "be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Phil. 4 v. 6).

'He knoweth them that trust in Him.' This is a special knowledge. He knows all things and all men, but the knowledge of His people is different from His general knowledge. It is a knowledge of love, a knowledge of interest that He has in them, and that knowledge too, which brought Him to stand in their exact place as a Surety. He knows their sins, and what they require to redeem them and to expiate their sins. Oh the intimate knowledge the Lord has of His people and all their perverseness! But 'He knoweth them that trust in Him.' They bring everything to Him – their life's minutest circumstance, things immensely great or, it may be, those that appear to be trifles. Oh, it is a mercy to realise what we were singing of that Friend (J Newton; Gadsby's 133). "There is a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother" (Prov. 18 v. 24).

The Lord knows them because they go to the throne of grace and pour out their heart unto Him, and trust in Him at all times, not *sometimes*, but *all* times. "Trust in Him at all times, ye people" (Ps. 62 v. 8), that is, 'ye troubled people,' those of you who say with Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life" (John 6 v. 68).

And then there will be the end. There will be some unto whom the Lord will say 'Depart, ye cursed. I never knew you' (Mat. 25 v. 41). And they will have the impudence and presumption to argue it out with Him, and say 'But we prophesied in Thy name. Surely you know me!' No, "I never knew you." But there will be some that He did know, that put their trust in Him, and He will recognise them. O poor sinner, that bows in secret with tears down thy face and out of thy soul, He will never say "I never knew you"! He has known your soul in adversity. Oh may this be a comfort for troubled people: 'The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble, and He knoweth' (and will know and recognise) 'those that trust in Him.'