

Sermon preached by Mr. F. L. Gosden at Galeed Chapel, Brighton, on
Lord's day morning, Jan. 21, 1962

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Text: Psalm ix. 9, 10.

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We are passing through a hostile wilderness, and everything in this world and in our nature is in opposition to the grace of God. Everything is in opposition to that way which leadeth to eternal life. No small part of the distress of a real pilgrim is a body of sin and death, and to find that what belongs to him is completely contrary to what he would be, and to what the Scriptures reveal a christian should be. But I do feel that it would, by the Spirit, be a comfort and consolation to consider that the very characters that the Lord Jesus mercifully assumed, and which characters He still exercises, must have their counterparts as a key to a lock, as a tenon that fits into a mortise, and as a head to a body. The head is useless without a body. Where there is a Saviour, there must have been a shipwreck. Where there is a Redeemer, there must be those who have sold themselves unto sin and Satan. Where there is a great High Priest, there must be sinners. Where there is saving grace, there must be those who are weak and need grace to be their sufficiency. As the Lord Jesus is made wisdom, there must be those that are ignorant; and as He is the Lord our Righteousness, there must be those that are naked. Therefore my friends, it is indeed a mercy if in our experience we are fitted for the Gospel; that is to say, if by divine teaching we are brought to know that in ourselves, in our person, in our flesh, in our natural being, there is no good influence, but everything is corrupt; and if by divine teaching we are brought to fall down where there is none to help. Some things you can feel. There is at times a passing of the sacred truth across your heart and mind which leaves a very sacred impression, without labour and without premeditation often. In the wisdom, and goodness, and power of God, He exercises all His divine perfections, His love, His grace, His mercy, right in the midst of all our corruptions, confusions, fears, distresses, dismays. You may see a beauty in it. Not generally - it can be seen generally through the great cloud of witnesses; but with respect to your own case, your own salvation and experience that the Lord has wrought in His faithfulness, in His wisdom as a God of Judgment, not only in His chastenings and in your afflictions, but in judging your case He has so ordered your worst things, your greatest calamities, and what is above all, your sins and depravity, and caused them to work together for good and for His glory in salvation.

"The Lord also" - and this word "also" to my mind refers to what has gone before. "The Lord shall endure for ever; He hath prepared His throne for judgment, and He shall judge the world in righteousness. He shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness." This finally will be the Judgment Day. What a great thing it is to come to God the Judge of all here below, and to come to Him in the Gospel, as we have it in the Hebrews: "Ye are come unto Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel, and to God the Judge of all". Oh it is a mercy to be brought to God the Judge of all in this life, in Zion where He judges His people from between the cherubims, through the dear Mediator, the Substitute;

But oh my friends, if it is otherwise, it will be a solemn judgment when the Lord will judge the people in uprightness, and the world in righteousness. I doubt not, if you were to ask the world in general if they wished there was no Judgment Day, they would all with terrible anxiety wish there was none, and they would wish there was no God, or that God was not what He is. Man is a religious being because of the exclusiveness of his creation. Created in the image of God, he is a religious being; and even an atheist has deep down in his heart some solemn conception of an eternal Judge, and wishes God was not what He is, and would not only dethrone Him, but would unGod Him if he could. What a solemn prospect this world has before it!

"And He shall judge the world in righteousness. He shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness. The Lord also" - there is something very tender, very gracious - "the Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed". Here you see the two things. What use would a refuge be if there were no oppressed? We little think how those things which oppress us, which cast us almost into despair, when we sink in deep mire and there is no standing, when we are walking in a horror of great darkness that can be felt - we little realize how those conditions make the characters of Christ a necessity, and these characters can only have a meaning or application in those conditions that cause us so much pain and so much distress. It may perhaps be a comfort - a negative comfort, and I would not set you down on negatives although there are some very blessed negatives - but if you have wrought in your experience that negative, "without Thee I can do nothing", and if you have learned and have that negative in your experience, "in me, that is in my flesh, there dwells no good thing", I will tell you what they will do. They will be such an urgency in your faith that you will not be satisfied until they meet a positive. A gracious negative will bring you earnestly to seek that you may have something positive, and blessed be God, the positives are greater than the negatives; and there is nothing will swallow up your doubts and fears, your ifs, and buts, and hows, as will the shalls and wills of Jehovah. It may help you to pray to realize these things.

"The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble." Oppression is a weight that is brought to bear which is heavier than can be borne. Some of you may be living under the oppression of something in your soul, or in your circumstances, or in both, that you can no longer carry. "They fell down, and there was none to help." Hezekiah was oppressed with a message, "Set thy house in order, for thou shalt die and not live". I should quite think that Hezekiah was but a middle-aged man at that time; and very solemn in middle age to receive such a message. Therefore he came to the Lord: "O Lord! I am oppressed; undertake for me". Or as the margin is - "ease me". It is only the Lord that can be a refuge for the oppressed and in the times of trouble. Who else can? So that we, as led by the Spirit, will be continually brought back to the Lord Jesus. The end and design of the narratives and parables in the New Testament are to this end, and for the encouragement of those who are in a like case. The woman with an issue of blood went to all kinds of physicians and became worse rather than better; but at last she came to the Lord Jesus. And so with them all, whether lepers, or possessed

of the devil, or a maniac, all were brought to the same blessed source of strength, and wisdom, and grace.

"The Lord will be a refuge for the oppressed." The margin says, "a high place", and therefore it takes us to the 91st Psalm: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High". Oh what a blessed thing it is to have a God-given faith in God, that stands in His power! The Lord Most High, Lord of lords, whose divine sovereignty orders the minutest circumstances of our lives. The Lord who, in His sovereignty, sets up one and puts down another. The Lord in whose hand there is a cup, and the wine is red, and it is full of mixture - life's cup, and the ingredients of that cup with respect to His people are mixed by divine wisdom and love, and He poureth out of the same.

"The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble." Nobody else needs it. Oh salvation, my friends, is an experience; it is a work in the soul. Salvation is not merely a theological proposition to be worked out by carnal reason, but to be walked out in a life of faith; and faith has to walk it out through the worst of conditions, to walk out this experience of salvation through the midst of all the corruptions and sins, in the midst of all the lusts of the flesh, of the rebellion of the Canaanites that dwell in our hearts, to walk it out through all the oppositions and conditions in this wilderness world, and therefore we shall need the Lord in all that He is, and there will be a beauty in Him. The contrast, the very opposition, the nature of our enemies, the condition of our fallen state and corrupt and depraved nature - faith has to live through it all, and in the midst of these conditions will the Lord manifest who He is. So only can we grow in a knowledge of Him, and if we have the life of God in our souls we shall grow in a knowledge of Him. Oh precious life!

Looking at oppression then, you may have that which is too heavy for you. You cannot carry it. It may be in soul experience. David tells us clearly what his burden was. He said that his sins as a heavy burden were too heavy for him. Are you sin-oppressed? Are you sin-darkened? Are you sin-weakened? Are you sin-destroyed, sin-distracted? I know no oppression like it, and the devil will put the pressure on it. What he says often is true - only half a truth, but it is true. The devil can convince a person of sin as well as the Holy Ghost, only in a different way. Then you may conclude you are just a reprobate, and have a name to live but you are dead, and will soon know the consequences of it. You will fear that at the last great Day, to the surprise of all your friends who have thought you to be a godly person, to their astonishment they will find you with the goats on the left hand, and you are oppressed.

"The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed." Well, the great point is this, as I view it. Take the case that we mentioned - the burden of sin. Universal it is, in everything that we think, or do, or say, and it springs from that evil corrupt root. Well now, the point to watch is this. If you have been so oppressed by yourself, and walk about as just a mass of sin, what has it done? How many in the height of summer come pouring into this town on the Lord's day, and make their way to the seaside, that have this oppression? Things may come so that they have remorse of conscience, but that will never bring them to God. But have you ever found that that has brought you to fall

prostrate before Him and say, "Lord, I am sin-oppressed, sin-darkened, sin-weakened, sin-wrecked; undertake for me?" And have you ever had some peculiar inkling in your heart of the sufficiency and efficacy of the merit of His precious blood? Have you, as you have brought such a case to Him, believed that He is able to save you though you are the uttermost, and that He could blot out your sins as a thick cloud, so that you have hoped in His mercy? Which will end well? I will say again what I have sometimes said, and it is a safe thing to say and you may depend upon it, that anything, whatever it is, however bad it is, will end well if it brings you to the throne of grace. Everything must end well there, and there is a refuge.

"The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed." You may be oppressed in your circumstances, and this oppression discovers a helplessness. You will be oppressed because you have no wisdom to direct your way, oppressed because everything is shut up, oppressed because there is a range of impassable mountains of impossibility before you, and because you have life before you and you know not how to proceed or what to do. There is a hymn just come to the mind:

"Whene'er I make some sudden stop,
For many such I make,
And cannot see the cloud cleared up,
Ner know which step to take,

"I to my Saviour speed my way,
To tell my dubious state;
Then listen what the Lord will say,
And hope to follow that."

See how it works together. Why my friends, we are fools, you know. I would not have a crook in the lot, I would not have a rainy day, I would not have a cloud in the sky, I would not have a pain in the body, if I could help it. What should we be like? What kind of soldiers should we be? There would be no victory to gain, no warfare. Why really my friends, at times when you come to consider these things in the light of the text, you can rejoice in tribulation also.

"A refuge in the time of trouble." If you take trouble out of the Psalms, there would not be many left. It is a divine appointment and promise, that through much tribulation we must enter the kingdom. Therefore says this same dear man, "The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble. The name of the God of Jacob defend thee, send thee help from the sanctuary"; that is, help from heaven. He is still the Mighty One. That help that was laid upon Him that is mighty, He still sends from heaven. "Send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion." Oh a precious prayer! I believe in my little way I have known it. Some of you who are passing through deep waters and oppressions, distresses, and troubles may have known the appointed means of grace to be made a rest, a sanctuary to your soul, and you may have had - I am speaking from a little experience - as you have sat there in the midst of scattered bones, deep calling unto deep at the noise of God's waterspouts, some distinct things from Christ Himself in heaven, and also some strength out of the provision that God has made in Zion. Felt it both; and they are both His, they are both of the Holy Ghost.

"The Lord also will be a refuge." He not only has been, He not only is; but He will be. Oh what a strength that has been in all ages!

"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever"! Upon the strength of that foundation Paul had this confidence: "Who hath delivered, who doth deliver, and in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us". Do you know Him? Have you anything for Him to do? Do you desire Him? What have you come for, friends? How did you come in hither? What was the state of your soul? What was the object before you? I increasingly feel the sacredness, the blessedness of a people gathered together by the Holy Ghost in their soul experience. It is inimitable. The church is unique, and you will love the habitation of His house and the excellent of the earth.

The Lord Jehovah is this refuge because He is God. So it goes right back to the days of Moses - "the eternal God is thy refuge". It is good to have godly faithful friends here below; but the most gracious and deeply-taught christian can do us no good in the time of trouble. It does indeed make Christ precious, for He is the refuge - God in Christ. He is a refuge because He is omnipotent. Poor, weak, finite creatures, beset with snares on every hand, full of mortal decay, need One who is mighty to save. The Lord too who is infinite in wisdom: "Hast thou not known, that the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary; there is no searching of His understanding?" Take your impossibilities to Him. Take your hard questions for Him to answer. Take your locked doors for Him to open. Take your enemies to Him to destroy. Take your sins to Him to forgive. "The Lord." I believe that I know Him. There are degrees in a knowledge of Him. You may know Him in this sense, that your case is such that if He does not regard you, nobody else can. You may know that. But if you press it, you will know Him by His gracious appearance and deliverance.

"The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble." Well, we are born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward, but we were never created to trouble. God is not the Author of trouble, any more than He is of sin; and yet shall there be evil in a city and the Lord hath not done it? How are you to reconcile these things that appear contradictory? Sin is the author of it, not God; but divine sovereignty does use trouble for the chastening of His people, for their correction, and in order to purge, refine, and purify them. It is a great evidence of the wisdom, and love, and compassion of God that throughout the Word He has given a record of the troubles through which the church has passed. Family trouble, circumstantial troubles, business troubles, soul troubles - every trouble. "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me." Oh the ramifications of experience, which embrace, I might say, the ramifications of the wisdom, and grace, and mercy of God as He executes His loving-kindness and tender mercies!

"And they that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee." Well, His name is the Lord Jehovah. "This is the name wherewith He shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness. His name shall be called Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins. His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace;" and some people know it. They know it exactly in that way with which we opened the service, as a key to the lock, as a tenon to the mortise, as doubts and fears are to hope.

And they know the name of the Lord so suited to them. Of what use would be a Counsellor if he had no client? What use would be an interpreter if all things were plain? But they that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee.

Therefore it is an interpretation of Nahum: "The Lord is good; a Stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that put their trust in Him". He knows them. Why? Where do they put their trust? At the throne of grace. He sees them there, knows them there, hears their cry. "Let Me hear thy voice; let Me see thy countenance; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." These are precious things in experience. You can taste them, and there is a substance in them. Oh to have the soul filled with Christ in the Gospel so as to take Him where He has appointed you to go! Blessed, to take Him into hospital! John took Him into prison. Daniel had Him in the lions' den. Jonah felt Him to be a refuge and trusted in His great name in the belly of hell; Jeremiah in the low dungeon. The two fit.

"Cheer up, ye travelling souls,

On Jesus' aid rely;

He sees us when we see not Him,

And always hears our cry".

"A refuge in time of trouble; and they that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee; for Thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek Thee." So there is a connection between seeking Him and trusting in Him, and that is an encouragement to seekers. If you are seeking the Lord, you will trust in Him; and if you are seeking and trusting in Him, you are coming to Him; and "he that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out".
