

Evening Sermon

*Praise ye the LORD: for it is good to sing praises unto our God;
for it is pleasant; and praise is comely. Psalm 147:1*

We mentioned a few things this afternoon concerning God's goodness, upon which we are all alike dependent, all of us. There is no exception to that truth. People not knowing that doesn't make any difference to the truth of it. The unhappiness of any person is a willing ignorance of God; the happiness of any person is their greatest desire to know the Lord by His own revelation, and by His own touch, and by His gracious manifestations. If there is a person here who has no desire – or indeed, if it not their **first** desire – to know the Lord, you are in an unhappy state. If there are people here whose greatest desire is to know the Lord by His own teaching, by His own application, and His own mercy, let me tell you: you are in a good place. You may be low; you may be here:

*Marks of grace I cannot show;
All polluted is my breast;
Yet I weary am, I know,
And the weary long for rest.*

(Gadsby's 356)

It may be that there are many here who haven't got what they want, but they **want** it. And if there is a place in your heart for the Lord Jesus Christ, nothing will ever take that place. If anything can take the place of the Lord Jesus Christ, you haven't the right desire. I don't mean by that that you always feel like that to the Lord Jesus, but there will always be this right at the bottom: where there is life, there will be that desire for the Lord, whatever is on the top of it. And whatever is on the top of it will never extinguish it. We are afraid sometimes that our sin will wear out our religion; but it never will. It will wear it **in**! I believe the Lord manages all gracious experiences, even when Satan seems to work most, the Lord will manage that. I believe if there is a place for the Lord Jesus in your heart, that the Lord will not allow anything in your experience to do you real hurt. Satan will do you hurt, and sin will do you hurt, but what I mean is: the Lord will over-rule what they might do, and He will make it all redound in the end to His honour and glory.

If there is a beginning to your religion, there is an end, a point to which you will be brought, that the Lord has in His mind that He will bring you to. We go wrong, the Lord makes us right; we never make ourselves right. But you see, where that desire is, that is happiness, and that person wants the Lord to deal with him, that he might have something to praise the Lord for.

I want, just for a moment, to speak of these words from all standpoints. One is the sovereignty of God's dealings among men. Now the earth is full of rebellion against God. You will hear people grumble about the weather, and about everything He does. Yes, they do! And this is grieving to a person who fears God. What you hear other people say will make you tremble. And why is it? Because you don't love the Lord as you would, and you come very short in every way in your own estimation, and you feel this: "If I come short in my own estimation, what must I be before God?" But still there is a tender place in your heart for His honour and glory, and that tenderness comes from love; it cannot come from anything else.

That is where God's people are separated from the world: **they** can speak against God and think nothing of it; He is everything to **you**; you want Him to have a place in your affairs, though you can not feel it as you would. But God is sovereign, my friends, over all men; and whoever fights against God, it is like the sea fighting against a rock; it breaks the wave, not the rock. There is no counsel or device against the Lord. What a mercy that is! The Lord has never left the management of the world in anybody else's hands, and that is a mercy. *He worketh His will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth.* It is not **in** the inhabitants of the earth, it is **among** them. O what a solemn thing it is for God's sovereignty to be **over** a person, and not **in** a person! God's sovereignty is in a person when he can say:

*Reign o'er me as King, accomplish Thy will,
And powerfully bring me forth from all ill;
Till, falling before Thee, I laud Thy loved name,
Ascribing the glory to God and the Lamb.*

(Gadsby's 129)

Now, the sovereignty of God is **in** you if you can say that, but all those who cannot say that, those who rebel against God, the sovereignty of God is **over** them. You see, if it is only **over** us, and not **in** us, it is not for our benefit. We read: *The LORD loveth the righteous*. O, I tell the Lord: "Whatever I am beside, let me be one of the righteous, one of those who have a new nature, one of those who are led by the Spirit, one of those who are sanctified by the Spirit. Whatever I am denied, don't deny me that love, don't deny me that Spirit, don't deny me that will to be sanctified, and Thy love to be made known. Whatever I may have to bear, whatever I have to be deprived of, oh don't deprive me of Thyself in the sense that Thou art communicable." All that He is in His Son is communicable; what He is in Himself as God is incommunicable. Yet that doesn't make any difference to God's sovereignty with regard to our daily needs.

And there is another thing I want to mention, and that is God's goodness in Providence never deteriorates. That is a wonderful mercy, my friends, and that is much to be thankful for. The sunshine is as efficacious now as it was; it is still as good as it was to the earth. Everything that man does wears out; it loses its strength; it loses its virtue. But you see, the sun, in its every ray of sunlight, has its qualities; it has life, it sustains life, it causes life to develop in every ray. There is warmth in every ray, by which things can expand, and by which things are enriched. We little know, my friends, what we owe to the heat of the sun. You see, anything that grows in the shade has no opportunity for the sun to come to it. There is no benefit in it. You can see that in an apple or any other fruit; you know which side the sun has shone upon it. The sun fully develops the nature of all things in Creation, and it is a marvellous thing, my friends.

And then you see the rain – it is just as good as ever it was when a shower is needed. It has the same effect year after year. You see all the ordinances of God in Creation, they are always prompt and regular and correct. Man can never work out the scheme like God's order; they try to, but they cannot. In the French Revolution, 120 or 130 years ago, the French nation, in their hatred to God, determined to stamp God out of their country, and all mention of God's name. And they erected a statue in Paris to the goddess Reason, and they altered the Day of Rest. Instead of having one day in seven, they have one day in ten. You see,

all their coinage is a decimal coinage; everything is in **tens** in the French money. In a few years this system broke down; it would not answer because they interfered – or **tried** to interfere – they could not **really** interfere with God's work – they **tried** to interfere. They think they can improve, but they can't. You see, all God's ordinances are a benefit. Now, if we could rise with the sun, and go to bed with the sun, it would be better, and more simple, and more natural in people; it would be better for their health. Men can never trample on God's laws in Creation without injury to themselves.

Praise ye the LORD. One other thing I would say, then I will try to move. And that is the **freeness** of God's gifts in Creation. Yes, you see, there is **nothing to pay**. The ordinances of God are so free that man cannot have anything to do with it. You know, it is the same light that shines through an attic window as a palace window; it is the same sun that shines on a poor man's garden as in a rich man's park – just the same. Men, if they could, would grade God's blessing, and they would have the first grade who had the most money. But God doesn't let things work like that; and we have this blessing: they share **equally** in God's providences with those whom we consider to be more favoured in circumstances; and those who have to labour for their living have less cause to envy the rich than they think. Often poor people are better in health than wealthy people. The man who lives simply from necessity lives best, because he lives on the good things that God gives, and he gives them **free**. You see, God doesn't deal like men. If you have electric light or gas light, you have to have a meter. God doesn't have any meter for **His** light; it is over all; it is equally distributed. There is not a person here but has reason to thank God for His goodness in Providence.

But I want to go further, because we never want to stay at that point in dealing with these things. We are not only favoured by God in Providence, but in grace. If we could only realise it by the teaching of the Spirit of God, I believe each of us would have exactly the same estimation of the value of our souls, as we have in the Scriptures: *What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* – and be cast away. (*Matthew 16:26*) That is Scripture, isn't it! *Praise ye the LORD, for it is good to sing praises unto our God*. That word *good* in the Scriptures, my friends, is a very particular word;

though often used, it has a particular meaning. It is one of the deepest words the Holy Ghost uses. It means that which includes God's glory and our real benefit. He hedges up our way for our benefit; He afflicts us in mercy, and it is good; everything the Lord does is good. *The LORD is righteous in all His ways, and holy in all His works.* That which is **good** in the sense if the Scripture is that which will issue in the glory of God and our real benefit. **That** is good, whatever it is; it is good to *sing praises unto our God.* Praise is, as I said this afternoon, the occupation nearest like heaven on earth.

I would like, just for a few minutes, speak of **how** it is good. First, it is **meet**, it is **due** that we should praise God, because He is worthy, my friends. There has never been a person who had praised God so much as He is worthy to be praised, either in Providence or in grace. We can all say, my friends, that we are debtors to the law; we can all say He is good to us. And you see, it is good also when we can realise that God is good to us; and when His goodness leads us to praise Him, it is good, it is glorifying Him. I was a long time before I could see – I hope the Lord has shown me since – how praise glorified God. I thought that God was so glorious, and so holy, and so gracious, and so exalted, and so happy in Himself, as it were, in His own attributes and affections, that for a poor sinner to praise God, it seemed to me, would be nothing to God, seeing that in Himself He was perfectly happy, perfectly holy, as it were living in His own will, His own pleasure. How could a poor creature, as it were, **please** God in glorifying God? You see, the law of God said: *Let us make man in our own image. (Genesis 1:26)* It is only man in all God's creatures that has a soul, that is capable of knowing God.

Now, all God's works praise God (*Psalm 145:10*), but there is none praise Him consciously – only His people. All creatures, showing forth God's praise, do not show forth God's praise consciously. It isn't from the heart; it is a natural outcome of their being, of their nature. You can see the glory of God in a blade of grass, if you have the eye to see it. It is God's handiwork. *All Thy works shall praise Thee, O LORD, but Thy sons shall bless Thee.* Now you see, when a saved sinner praises God, they are using all their greatest powers; they are the **powers** of the **soul**, as David in the 103rd Psalm says: *Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.* It is a blessed thing, my friends, to praise

God for five minutes, and for it to be in your heart's desire to praise God, as we read in one of the psalms: *Praise waiteth for Thee, O God, in Sion. (Psalm 65:1)* In the margin there you read: *Praise is silent to the LORD.*

I have often thought a child of God is like an instrument; it cannot play itself; it needs someone to do it. And God has put it into the hearts of His people to praise Him, and to be to the praise and the glory of His grace. It is good for your heart to be going out to the Lord in gratitude, and in praise, and in thanksgiving; it is good because it is meet, and because it honours God, and because it is such a blessed occupation. You would not want to be that way from praising God if you have a spirit of gratitude for anything in the world; you would not want to be disturbed if you have a spirit of gratitude, if you have a spirit of praise, if you feel your heart humble under a sense of God's goodness; you would not be disturbed for anything. If you have a corner belonging to you privately, you would want to be by yourself, you would not want to be heard or seen by anyone. It is **that** occupation that lifts you above the cares, the burdens, and sins of this sinful world. O, for the most part, we have to say:

*Look how we grovel here below,
Fond of these trifling toys;
Our souls can neither fly nor go,
To reach eternal joys.*

*Come, Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove,
With Thy all-quickenning powers;
Kindle a flame of sacred love
In these cold hearts of ours.*

(Gadsby's 25)

My friends, we have to say it is good, even in that sense: praise is **scarce**. How many days of praise do you get in a year? **real** praise? Not many! You will have many days of prayer, but **one day** of **real praise** is **scarce**; it is good; it is God's work; it is the crown of our experience when we praise the Lord. The Puritans used to say that one page of praise is worth many pages of prayer. Yes, praise is not empty; it isn't when people stand in the corner of the streets, and as soon as a verse is given out, off they go with it. Praise is that which brings you

near to God, that which lifts you above the world, and you say: *It is good to sing praises*, and where there is singing there is harmony. You cannot sing if there is discord; when we sing, everything is right, everything is in accord. And when you praise the Lord, you would not have anything altered; when you can see His mercy, **that** will bring harmony, and you will want everything to be in subjection to Him; you will want Him to have the management of your life.

It is good to sing praises unto our God. And mark, when people praise Him, it is a personal thing. You don't praise God unless you are looking to Him. *It is a good thing to sing praises unto our God.* You see, it is **personal praise**. One says: *O LORD, I will praise Thee: though Thou wast angry with me, Thine anger is turned away, and Thou comfortedst me. (Isaiah 12:1)* One of the sweetest feelings is to feel the sweetness of God, and it is causing a thanksgiving and praise to Him. *It is good to sing praises unto our God.* That makes all the difference, my friends, whether He is **our** God; that is the point that exercises every living soul, whether the Lord is **their** God or not. They want His own witness – oh, they do! What I want to know is this, as an old minister said to me years ago. It was the last time I ever did see him; he had got to the age when he was laid aside from his work in the ministry. He drew a line on the pathway with his stick, and said: "Do you know the thought that is more and more with me? It is this: Which side of the line am I?" Now, my friends, we know this: it is only by the witness of the Spirit that you can call God **yours**. It doesn't make any difference to **reality**. When we are afraid to claim, it is because of the want of the witness of the Spirit, and that is a tender fear. Your desires are the **other side** of the line, and you want the Lord to take you there, and show you your interest, so that you may say: *Our God.*

It is good to sing praises unto our God. Now, if God is yours, you cannot want anything else – I mean, you cannot **lack** anything else. One says:

*If Jesus is ours, we have a true Friend,
Whose goodness endures the same to the end;
Our comforts may vary, our frames may decline,
We cannot miscarry; our aid is divine.*

(Gadsby's 343)

We have it in the 8th verse of this psalm: *Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God: who covereth the heaven with clouds.* Satan tries some of God's people who have a reasoning mind. Some of God's people are tried often about God Himself. It seems so terrible, but there is oftentimes a temptation: How do you really know there is a God? and how do you know that God is **your** God? *Who covereth the heaven with clouds.* Man cannot touch the heavens. Whatever he may do on the earth, that is as far as he can go; man must always come back to the earth. That is his place; he cannot get away from it – not really. So that everything in the heavens is God's work: *Who coverest the heavens with clouds.* You notice sometimes how quickly the clouds will cover the sky; those illimitable miles all around the horizon covered with clouds in a very few minutes – black, heavy storm-clouds, sometimes. Then when the clouds are there, you cannot take them away. We haven't seen much of the sun lately; everyone wants the sun at present; but if God covers the heaven with clouds, you cannot take them away.

Who covereth the heavens with clouds. What does that mean? If you have got clouds in your life, it is God who has put them there, or permitted them to be there. If you have got trials, you cannot touch them; they are in God's hands. And all that which hides the sun in your life, **He** can uncover the sun, and no one else. That is how we know that He is **our** God. *Who covereth the heaven with clouds.*

For it is pleasant. My friends, sin mars our service oftentimes; it mars our thinking; it mars our reading. Many a Lord's Day does not seem like a Lord's Day to you. You may sit in the house, and your mind is worried and troubles with business and people, and perhaps worse things going from your mind even when you are in the house of God. It is a good place to be – the house of God; you may be in prayer, or you may say: "Lord, I would be different to what I am." It is a good place to be in if you are wanting the Lord. But now, if the Lord is pleased to smile, to cause His doctrine to *drop as the rain*, and His speech to *distil as the dew (Deuteronomy 32:2)* – what a difference! It is the Lord's presence that makes comfort; it is the Lord's presence that makes things comfortable; it is the Lord's presence that turns our captivity. *Unto you that fear My name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in His wings.* And then you begin to sing. Perhaps you know what it is,

some of you, for the Lord to change your sighing into singing; your prayer into praise! Isn't it pleasant! It isn't pleasant to the old man. The things of God are pure, and that is why they are pleasant. It is pleasant to realise this; everything that God does for you – it is an evidence that He is **your** God. And that strengthens your hope, you know. Every favour He does for you will be an additional evidence, and you will say:

*He that has led me hitherto,
Will help me all my journey through.*

Every blessing has two aspects to it. It has a backward aspect; it has a forward aspect. When the Lord brings you out again, and shines on your path, then you can think it is right. He will also cause you to look forward, and comfort you with regard to the future. That strengthens our hope, and that hope is like an anchor to our souls. *Praise is pleasant; praise is comely.* It is not unreasonable that God's people should praise Him; it is not unbecoming that they should praise Him. They never feel really happy; they never feel really comfortable; they never feel in their right place, except when they can praise God. *Prasie is comely*, and He delights in it.

*Saints are holy in His sight,
He views His children with delight;
He sees their hope, and knows their fear,
He sees and loves His people dear.*

And He is pleased to hear your praise; and you feel: "I wish I could always be in this place." We often say:

*More frequent let Thy visits be,
Or let them longer last;
I can do nothing without Thee;
Make haste, O God, make haste.*

(Gadsby's 251)

Whenever you can praise the Lord; when He causes His goodness to be felt; when He impresses you with a sense of His favour; that will be comfortable work, agreeable work. You will find it pleasing to the

Lord, and He will put a seal of approbation upon your conscience, in your experience.

There is one other thing I would like to say. If your conscience is tender, you know whether the Lord is near you or not; you will know that in praise and in prayer. That is part of God's work with a child of God, that inward realisation. You will know when you are shut up, and you will know when you get gracious access to Him; you will know whether you are singing the words, or singing the matter. Now, you can praise God without saying a word. Your heart can sing while your tongue is silent; and there may be malady in your heart to the Lord; and you find the opportunity that you should praise the Lord with your lips openly. And that made the psalmist say: *In the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee. (Psalm 22:22)* Why should he say, *in the congregation?* Because it is to show you cannot praise God only in the market, or in the workshop. But when your heart goes with a hymn, you can praise God then *in the congregation*. And my friends, it is very blessed when our hearts are engaged when we sing the hymns. Then *it is pleasant, and praise is comely*. It is a good thing to be engaged in the service and in the praise of God.

But I must leave it, as the time has gone. May the Lord add His blessing to these few comments. Amen.