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Notes of Sermon preached by our Pastor

on Sunday Evening, December 15, 1974

Lesson. 2 Chronicles 20. vv.1-30.

O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee. 2 Chronicles 20. 12.

I wish to say immediately I could see in the distance this Scripture and the whole of the narrative when I announced the Text of the morning and afternoon. So it appears to be a sequel to the divine services and the message of God to us this Day. I will briefly recount the circumstances obtaining, and give a biographical note concerning the good, gracious, honourable, eminent King of Judah, Jehoshaphat, who began to reign when he was thirty-five years of age, and reigned twenty-five years. So even by your standards to day he was not an old man when he died. How blessed Judah was to have such a godly man to reign over them! and in their midst a gracious, godly influence felt throughout the land, and the people wonderfully benefited. So let us thank God for Jehoshaphat, and for what is chronicled concerning him. We may take and spread his wonderful case before God, - the exemplary character of the man, and ask Him of His mercy to repeat the same. A favoured place Britain would be, and the countries of the world to have such a reigning monarch or government. As is so sadly common with all, his life was not blemish free. There were several things he erred in. Ahab was on the throne of Israel, and he joined in affinity with Ahab against Syria, which was displeasing to God. And he disobeyed the injunction given by the Lord's messenger and so he narrowly escaped death.

I will take up the subject before us and summarise. There must have been a time, however gracious he was, when he became strong in his own strength, and his folly was, he knew what to do, as he thought. The plan was in knowing what to do to join in affinity with Ahab. This was a dangerous course, and the net result is obvious because it is chronicled. How do we find him here as the case is recorded in Scripture? Let us examine the case and see if we may hope we are in a similar condition. The adventure nearly cost him his life, and the reproof he received from God was sanctified to him, so when the threat of invasion came from the combined host of his enemies, the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, he was in a good place before God. He was humbled, and the correction had been deeply sanctified to his soul. I felt as I read his prayer how precious and rich it is to me. Take the word when he went to the House of the Lord; "For thy name is in this house." "If, when evil cometh upon us, as the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in thy presence, (for thy name is in this

house,) and cry unto thee in our affliction, then thou wilt hear and help." A blessed prayer this was to the Lord. So he was in a good condition: humbled, submissive, penitent; in the Lord's hand; stripped of all props, and the arm of flesh he ceased from. My Text is the end of his petition to the Lord. He says; "Neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee." He really answered the first part of the clause in the second. "Neither know we what to do:" and this is the answer he gives; "but our eyes are upon thee." For a child of grace to be brought into the position, although it is painful and exceedingly trying to come to a complete extremity,- "Neither know we what to do:" yet it is a good place to be in. He did know what to do, but I can understand his meaning. He did not know what to do on earth. He did know spiritually, blessed be God! "our eyes are upon thee." You are not in this place every day, nor every month, nor every year, but you will be there. "Neither know we what to do." It is an impasse: but in our souls we know what to do. "our eyes are upon thee." I hope for a few minutes the Lord will give me grace to speak to this word.

It is remarkable as to the variations in the life of a child of God. There are times when you do know what to do. Noah did. The Lord said to him; "Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch within and without with pitch." He knew what to do. Abraham did. God said; "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee." The Lord gave him a wonderful promise as to what He would do for him, and by faith he obeyed. He knew what to do. If I take up this point with you, there are times when you know exactly what to do in the spiritual realm when the Lord has settled a matter in your poor soul. Good King Hezekiah said; "What shall be the sign that I shall go up to the house of the Lord?" The Lord gave him a sign. There are seasons and occasions with the people of God when they know what to do: it is settled in their heart. They must go to the House of the Lord and obey Him and pay their vows, honours, and homage to Christ. You know what to do. The Lord has made it clear: He has confirmed it and made you willing, and though a poor trembling soul you know what to do; you know what the will of God is. The Lord has made it plain: He has appeared to some of you. Some have followed Him in holy baptism. Did you not know what to do? As I have preached the Word I have known that precious souls have been in the net and they knew what to do; there has been no uncertainty.

So it is wonderful to know what to do. This year some of you have known what to do, and you have been able to testify as to what was settled in your heart, and so you have known the course before you. It is sweet to feel the love of Christ constraining you: a sweet willingness, and to find yourself unable, (not that you have planned; God has planned it) to leave the holy place without expressing what is in your heart and to honour Christ

Before the burial of Mr Cottingham some had said; "Who has the mantle fallen on?" (They did not mean for the ministry.) A voice said to me; "You preach from this: "if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." I thought this is not congruous with a funeral, but God had taken one to glory and He would fill the breach with a precious soul in the Church below. I waited in the vestry: I knew what to do, and someone else did. I waited in sweet expectation, and presently a voice said: "I am the one." A gracious young man knew what to do.

Do you know what to do? I know I am taking a course I did not anticipate: I speak as led by the Spirit. You remember, a number of you, when the Lord so settled it and it was all arranged. You knew what to do, and you could not get out of the main gate. It is sweet to witness this; to be in the atmosphere of it. You know they know what to do. They have fallen in sweet willingness into the Lord's hands. It is the same for those ordained and anointed for the ministry of the gospel: they know what to do. The Lord will not allow them to ask for another confirmation. It is the same in the realm of providence. "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord." "Wilt thou go with this man? I will go." She knew: there was no uncertainty. Take divine providence, and your house. Before we moved to The Grove it appeared totally impossible. I knew what to do on the Lord's Day: it was settled. God gave me two words: "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord." I did not feel to be a good man: it is only in my precious Saviour. I listened, and I said, What is it, Lord? There is a step here. It got to the Sunday and He spoke again; "And he gave him the whole land." I wanted it spiritually and also in providence. I knew what to do in the Auction Room. The auctioneer tried to get a higher price: presently God stopped their mouths and it was finished. I said ^{to} the Lord, Now, Lord, prove it: and I said £25 more, and the hammer went down. I knew what to do. You know what to do : your eyes are on Him; there is no uncertainty. How wonderful when those who are young in the way and the Lord is beginning to open their eyes, realise; "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." Some have submitted this to me. They have said; "I have proved something. I thought I was a free agent, and I was going to do this and that." There was an almighty hand overruling all: stopping them; closing doors, and opening something different. It is wonderful how the Lord can settle a matter in your heart so you knew what to do. "our eyes are upon thee." There is a constant watching and waiting at the Throne of Grace, and you know what to do. This is sweet to me because I did not expect to refer to it.

Gideon knew what to do. He was poor and lowly, and he wanted something confirmatory. The Lord said to him; "Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel." He said; "Lord, give me the fleece wet and the fleece dry." He

knew what to do. Are there those matters that exercise your soul, and you know what to do? (This is a homely discourse.) I feel to say to you, those of you who are deeply exercised concerning your family. Many are coming to teen age: they will be leaving school and going out into the world, and there is so much to face. You will want to feel settled in your heart as to what they should do. When our oldest son intended going to sea we were anxious about him. The Lord made it clear and settled the matter. He said;

"At home, or abroad, on the land, on the sea,

As thy days may demand, shall thy strength ever be." (329)

It was settled: I knew it would be well, and it proved to be so. So with your children it is a great matter when the Lord settles and makes clear as to His way.

I should like to mention this. (I do ^{not} want to weary you by repeating it) I always remember when I had a confirmation of a tumour that could have been malignant, I did not know what to do until I was in the consulting room in Harley Street. My God was in the room, and the great man as he is, when he confirmed the diagnosis said; "I shall not charge you." He could have charged me fifty or a hundred guineas. "I shall not charge you, a minister of Christ." It was as if the glory of God filled that room in Harley Street, and I knew what to do: not a shadow of doubt. All I had to do was to obey and follow. If you get assurance you will know what to do. You can walk into the ward and get into bed quietly and peacefully, as a child in its mother's arms; and this covers every facet of human life.

Let us look at the other side. As there are times when you do know what to do, so there are times when you are uncertain, and you dither. Which way shall I go? "Lord, decide the doubtful case." and the best thing to do by the grace of God, is to stand still. If the Lord has not given you venturing faith to do, it is better to ask Him to give you grace to stand still until you see clearly. "He that believeth shall not make haste." "Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will show unto you this day." There are people who would push you into something; overpersuade you. It is good to stand still until the Lord makes it plain.

Jehoshaphat said; "Neither know we what to do." The reason why he did not know what to do was, the Lord had not revealed it to him. It is the same for you. Immediately the Lord revealed it to him he knew what to do. - You do not know what to do when you are in the dark, stripped of human resources, when you recognise your own weakness and liability to err, and you are afraid of being left to yourself. So he could say; "Neither know we what to do." Is this new? No. Let me take you back in spiritual experience. Under the process divine of the spiritual application of the holy law of God to your soul, you were strapped, wounded, condemned, killed; you had no hope, and you did not know what to do.

"What shall I do, or whither flee,
To escape the vengeance due to me?" (238)

Come, you spiritually minded people, you must have been there. You walked the streets a lost sinner, and you did not know what to do, and you could not tell any one, Why did you not know what to do? Because Christ had not been revealed. What can a poor soul do who knows not a revealed Christ? You look to God, and it seems impossible that He will ever show mercy. This is a good place to be in. Listen to Jeremiah; "Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall. My spūl hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope." That is to say, you had a real work in you years ago. God quickened you and brought you under condemnation, and you did not know what to do. It was not long before you did know. Immediately the blessed Saviour was revealed you fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before you, and you have known what to do ever since. You know how it comes in the silence by God in your soul. It is a beautiful word. It is plenary, comprehensive; it covers all: "Looking unto Jesus." Whether you are young, old, in business, mothers, or fathers, afflicted, tried; there is onw word for all who fear God: "Looking unto Jesus." Wonderful it is to have eyes of faith! "Neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee," Amen.