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Substance of Two Sermons preached by our Pastor
at Robertsbridge, on November 27, 1974.

Afternoon Lesson. Acts 10.

Thus saith the Lord God; I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock.

Ezekiel 36. 37.

If I listen to the cruel adversary I shall think myself foolish in reading this Text before you to day in Bethel Chapel, Robertsbridge. But although there is a tremendous force in opposition to the Scripture, the building must rise; the Kingdom of God will be established, and every living stone will be quarried, and built up into a spiritual house, an holy priesthood; "and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it." I want to express myself personally. This Text would have been altogether a concise summary of all the prayers, exercise and labour of dear Ada Buss, a great woman of God in this Church. She saw a certain measure of what she had laboured for in deep sorrow over many years, but these days she never saw. I hope and believe she died in faith that it would be accomplished. If so, my Text, the whole of the subject matter of the sacred Scripture must be accomplished because it is the sacred office, prerogative, power, authority, and unction of the Holy Ghost to bring it to pass.

The whole point is, if you have a "Thus saith the Lord God," whatever God is pleased to say will come to pass. Notwithstanding the opposition of all the powers of darkness, the antipathy of the flesh, and every obstacle hindrance, impossibility, mountain, if there is a "Thus saith the Lord God" what Christ has said must be fulfilled. Obviously this is a deep exercise, spiritual and divine, given by the Holy Ghost to all those born again: they must have a "Thus saith the Lord God," an eternal foundation, a solid Rock His voice, His speech, His smile, His authority, approbation, confirmation "Thus saith the Lord God."

I suppose it will be desirable to endeavour to make a few preliminary

remarks on the prophecies. I will just mention that at the Prayer Meeting last night at the Dicker I spoke from the early part of the Book. How wonderful that in the time of the seventy years captivity when Nebuchadnezzar carried king Jehoiachin of Judah to Babylon, there were men of God carried with them. Why? Think for a few moments of, first, the extreme solemnity of the case. The Israelites who were carried captive suffered severely because of their provocation of the Most High God, and because of their persistence in sin and rebellion against Him. The Lord is slow to anger: He did not allow Nebuchadnezzar to carry them to Babylon quickly. He constantly reproved them; gave them space to repent in a natural sense. They flouted His royal statutes, and He said; "and ye would not."-would not listen to God. O the wicked aversion of the flesh to God, to prayer, to all that is right and spiritual; the recklessness of sin; the determination to disobey and rebel; the awful abominations in the land in the chambers of imagery; the idolatry and love of sin!

If I go aside, some of you will say; "That is my nature." The mercy is the foe has been "received a favourite, An alien made a child." (792) The solemnity was, as a very last measure the Lord allowed His own nation to be carried to Babylon for seventy years, and seventy years is a life-time. Some of them never came out: some did not want to; they were at home. Do you see the point? They were a mixed company, and some had no wish to come out, they were at home in the world. They may have had a superficial covering of religion: if they were at home in the world, then it was no captivity to them. They were happy to be in the world; idolatry was their choice. My point is, the Lord severed them from their land, but they had Ezekiel. After five years he began his prophecy, and his ministry covered many years. It is believed that he did not come out; - his ransomed soul came out.

There are two parts to his prophecy. The first was, when they went into captivity the frame of spirit of the Jews was one of rebellion, and the great man of God, whose name means 'Jehovah my strength', -and he needed it. the great man stood up among them in their unhumiliated and rebellious frame. The Lord told him they were rebellious people. He said; "They will not listen to you. They will not listen to Me." The first part of his ministry was to reveal the basic cause of their sufferings,- their sin and their provocation of the Majesty of God. This needed a man of tremendous courage

and this is pitifully lacking to day. Hardly any in the Church of God or in our national life have courage to denounce evil: there is silence. It is very solemn, you know.

This man stood up among them; His life must have been often in jeopardy, as he exposed to them their state; why they were in Babylon; why God had visited them. Clearly, under the Spirit this should be, and is, a part of the ministry as we know it to day by God-anointed ministers. It must form a part of their ministry. If it is lacking, people get loose; the world continues to make further inroads; there is laxity, and a moribund state. People are spiritually dead, or almost dead. Do you think this is a correct analysis of the present time? I do not suggest that it is plenary: it covers many hearts and peoples. You take this simile: if as I suppose, many are interested in your gardens, if you want to grow good crops you have to deal with the briars and rubbish; to extirpate all this; get rid of it. That is the initial step: yet people think they can have all the briars and weeds of the world and still get something spiritually. This is not logic. It is vastly important in view of eternity, which is all around us. Time is a part of eternity that cannot be defined. We shall all launch into an eternal state: what about your heart? my heart? It deeply worries and concerns me. Are there so many weeds, rubbish, briars and thorns that^{it} is almost impossible to be spiritual and fruitful? You must face this before your Maker. Do you bear precious fruit? or do the thorns and thistles and rubbish choke everything? You can hear all the sermons, and have no fruit because your heart is choked. Very solemn.

So I can almost visualise poor Ezekiel, sad with all the suffering round him, yet the people were rebellious, and he was denouncing their crimes and revealing why they were in captivity and showing the justice of God. O the courage of this great man! When you read the first part you will understand better. "Be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house. And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear. - Speak." I should like to say, I am sure what he had to say he said in love and to the glory of God: not in his own spirit, but in the Spirit of God. That is a proviso always to bear in mind. It is not a matter of shouting; falling into a hateful spirit. It is to speak the truth in love and faithfulness.

There was another section of his ministry. We know not, only God Himself knows the percentage of Israelites in captivity who were brought to repent humbled under the mighty hand of God; very gracious characters who were in a good place. Ezekiel had a happy rôle as many were humbled and knew the sanctifying power of the Spirit, and his work to them was to give ~~them~~ heart and courage, and to pronounce, especially from verse 25, the blessings of Christ's Kingdom. This was something like 3,400 years before the birth of Christ. Such a profound knowledge by revelation had the prophet of the coming of the Saviour. "Thus saith the Lord God," and He gave him wonderful words concerning the blessings of Christ's Kingdom.

So the second part of his ministry was to cheer, hearten and invigorate their poor, desolate spirits, and show them God's purpose concerning their restoration and return. "Then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them." Listen to them: they are saying this; they ~~are~~ ~~are~~ back. "The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad. Turn again our captivity, O Lord, as the streams in the south. They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." Can you see the scene? They were brought to repentance in Babylon, - sowing in tears, and coming again with rejoicing ~~and~~ bringing their sheaves with them. All this Ezekiel was able to prophesy to those humbled souls. It is wonderful to me to think of the background of the prophecy. Cast your mind back: it was three and a half thousand years before the Advent, yet he was able to bring forth this. I will tell you one thing essential and vital; one of the greatest principles in the Kingdom of God; divine revelation and inspiration: revelation from the Spirit, and inspiration by the Spirit. You will see far if the Lord gives you revelations.

So the Text to day, which I did not know how to take, falls into the category of the blessings of Christ's Kingdom. You see the background. He says; "Thus saith the Lord God; I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock." Before I go further I will say this. I have really contemplated with wonder this afternoon, the basic fact that five and a half thousand years ago from now, Ezekiel the prophet gave the blessings of Christ's

Kingdom, and these are the very words I personally am led to plead before the Lord frequently, and under a deep sense of need. He says; "From all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you." Is it relevant to you to day? It is so wonderful to think after thousands of year this is the word in your soul. You plead it before God. He says; "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean." Where does clean water come from? What is your mind led to? Golgotha; the spear; the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness. See how amazing inspiration and revelation is! There is pure water to cleanse you: there is a fountain, and in that fountain all the Church of God is cleansed, and if the Lord is pleased to sprinkle clean water on you you are clean. If you are clean you will go to heaven. If you are not clean you never will, with all your religion. So I quickly appeal to you who fear God. Is your daily longing and aspiration to be washed, and made whiter than snow? to know you are clean? So he brings forth the blessings of Christ's Kingdom.

"Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean." The term would offend some: it does not offend me. It grieves me that I am filthy: it is my nature. I am not at home in it: I want to fly from it. One day I shall. Life is not a bed of roses: it is a bed of thorns, and you will prove it so. The Lord comes where I am. I need the Text. When you think of your record and all the years, you see all the refuse, the filthy rubbish dumped, and it is in your nature, does that offend you? It is true. We are all clean physically, I believe. "Water the body laves." You love to be clean. It is inside. Are you clean? or is there an accumulation of filthy rubbish? Do you think you will get to heaven? Blessed be God! there is clean water, a fountain, and sprinkling, and sinners are clean. I thank God for the ministry of Ezekiel, and for its inclusion in the canon of Scripture. How beautiful for us in Bethel! "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean." "From all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you." God knows when an idol is set up in the chamber of imagery and worshipped and incense burned to it.

"Thus saith the Lord God; I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." This is one of the things He will be inquired of to do it for them. So have you inquired? The word means to seek to obtain by asking, humbly asking. There is nothing involved about it. It may be suggested to you that God will not listen to you: that you do not

know anything at all spiritually. It is as simple as, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." If you feel your need you may inquire of Him. When you inquire of Him you will never get access, only in one way. Never mind how inarticulate you are; never mind your broken sentences. The point is, pray as you are favoured, with faith in the Name of Jesus. You must go to God through Jesus. There is no other way. Go to Him and plead the Name of His dear Son. Ask if you may come through Jesus, and you may inquire. It is one of the sweetest things on earth to go to the Throne of Grace and find sweet access and to know the secret of it: to know what the key is: for poor broken-hearted sinners to come through a bleeding Saviour seen by faith; pleading His peerless Name, His precious merit, His vital, shed blood, His victory, His obedience. And He says; "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it," It means the very thing: the things referred to in the paragraph; all that is proclaimed by Christ; all that fills His gospel. It; the things you need; in a word, you need Him. Blessed be God. Amen.

