

Evening Lesson, Ezekiel 37.

Hoping I shall not deteriorate from the afternoon divine service, and trusting to take up the thread of holy truth I will mention the connecting link, the survey given to the friends in the afternoon concerning the amazing ministry of the prophet Ezekiel and among the captives in Babylon, and how it is divided into two sections. In the first place we mentioned that many of the captives as they went into servitude were bitterly rebellious, resentful, and unhumbled. In the fifth year Ezekiel stood, and by the command of God ministered solemnly to them by analysing the basic cause of their distress and agony,- failing to hear the Lord's voice; their backslidings, grievous idolatry and sin, so his ministry was solemn indeed. Blessed be God, there was a remnant among them of God-fearing people. The Lord always does one thing for His own dear people,- He sanctifies them wholly, and sanctifies to them all the dispensations of His hand. There is not a dispensation the people of God come into but the Lord will sanctify it to them: it is made a divine blessing to them. It further separates them from sin, the flesh, and the world, and brings them closer to Him, and

conforms ^{them} more to His image.

So there were poor, dear, suffering Israelites, gracious characters, and the Lord sanctified their troubles to them, so the second part of his ministry was to comfort, hearten, and cheer those dear souls. As we have in the chapter from verse 25 he promulgated all the blessings of the Kingdom of God to them. My Text is a part of the paragraph and the wonderful pronouncement. Listen to it: because it will be my sacred duty, and I hope, my pleasure, to try to work it out with you. It is a word that is a household word to the people of God. Never to my knowledge have I tried to preach from it before: it had to be this. It is a word that every praying soul knows well. I will tell you why. On many occasions the Spirit of God will exhibit it before the eye of faith, whether you are a gracious, praying man in the Church, or a dear sister who prays and joins with us. Am I right? It is, as God's words are, very positive and potent. So listen to the language; "Thus saith the Lord God." I can never begin to speak of the tremendous importance of this divine statement. It is the word of Jehovah Himself; "I AM." He said to Moses; "I AM hath sent me unto you." "I AM THAT I AM." It carries the weight of Deity; of the divine perfections of God; His omnipotence, immutability, boundless love concerning His dear people, and all the fulness of the accomplished work of redemption by our Lord Jesus Christ, and all the power of the Spirit. The Trinity is here. "Thus saith the Lord God." What does He say? His word never fails. I want grace to look into it.

It is wonderful if "Thus saith the Lord God" is on your side. You are under the clement view of God; His compassionate ^{eye} is on you. So this could be spelt out; nothing can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. All the powers of hell are impotent to overthrow the designs of God. He will accomplish what He has decreed. It will carry you through life, your ministry, office, afflictions, troubles, temptations, responsibilities, emergencies, life, death, and into His glorious presence. "Thus saith the Lord God." The whole human race is impotent to overthrow divine decrees. All the powers of darkness, of men, armies, dictators, Antichrist, are impotent to prevent or to overthrow a "Thus saith the Lord". What does the Lord say? "I will." "I will." Do you realise how your life is regulated by this? Have you come to realise that one of the greatest

things in life is to be brought into harmony with the will of God? to know peace, strength, joy? It means you need to be brought to say; "Thy will be done." It is great in divine teaching to be completely submissive to the will of God in everything. His will has relation to the sacred ordinance of prayer and His responses to prayer. He says "I will."

I will make reference to the exercise of prayer with the people of God. I know and recognise that the Lord has various methods of responding to living prayer. There is the time factor. It may be there are times when He answers before you call. It is an amazing thing. "Before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." Do you know it? I do. There is something pressing on your spirit, and the sacred, reverent response of your spirit ~~is~~ to the divine hand of God is to go into retreat to go in secret and call on Him, to spread your case before Him. Before you get there He answers. It is wonderful: do you know it? So the petition that goes from your soul is answered before you have started. The Lord indicates in the matter His will and the path you will tread, and His divine purpose in it. I ought not to speak personally, but we experienced this with what was almost the last illness of our second daughter many years ago. I was preaching in London, and when I got back she was almost gone: they gave no hope. On the Thursday I was to preach in the evening, and I felt it was impossible. I wanted to go in secret and call upon God, and He answered before I could pray.- At such times every breath is the breath of prayer, but before I could get in secret He said; "Is thy God able?" and the path opened in front of me. I saw that every prop would fail: we should come to an extremity: also it was His will to exercise almighty power and heal the dear child. So He may answer before you pray. You will walk it: you will prove it.

There is another time factor,- the prayers of a child. I prayed as a child and I never waited long for an answer. It seems as though in early days the Lord often answers soon. I prayed about everything at school, and it was not long before the Lord answered. A beautiful life-a prayer life is! all you do,- driving, working, preaching, it is a matter of prayer: all your difficulties, all things; there is prayer. Where you live, and for how long your illnesses, trials, friendships, everything; it is prayer. That is how the Lord will have it. He says; "Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet far

this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them."

A third time factor is in the stern passage, through the deeper portion of the journey you will often wait long for an answer. That is what I wanted to name. You have formidable foes; the devil, and unbelief; a body of sin and death, and a sinful aversion to prayer. There is such a terrible feeling of despondency when you pray on, and you have a foundation for your prayer. God gave you a child and He gave you a promise, so you have got something to base your prayer on, - God in the promises. You do not just look at the promise, but at God in the promise. The trial is, often you plead, cry, wait and wait, and the devil takes advantage of it, and he says there is nothing in it at all. You get to the place dear Mr Field came to in his last days; too weary to be exercised. You are so weary you do not know how to be in labour. I am here in the Name of God to give you a message. Jehovah says; "I will." You can say sometimes as in the Hymn concerning the Incarnation, when the Lord is with you; "Bow down, sense and reason, faith only reign here." (40) With all the opposition from Satan, and the despondency of your poor heart, this is the word; "Thus saith the Lord God; I will." What will He do? Do you believe it? Do you believe that what He says He will fulfil? Has the Lord given you faith to believe it? What He says in His word He will fulfil. "I will." The sacred, sovereign, divine, inscrutable will of God relates to His divine decrees and holy purposes. It is settled in heaven; the great Master plan. "I will." I should say you are thinking;

"The stoutest rebel must resign
At Thy commanding word." (194)

"I will."

The will of God involves us all: it is what His will is, whatever it is, whether it relates to time, place, means, mode. You say concerning it in some things, you felt reluctant, or, it was inconvenient. You felt rebellious, and you would say No. If the Lord says; "I will" whether it is for to day or tomorrow, what you will do, and so on, this will stand because the Lord makes His people willing. God does not drive, He draws His people. He does not influence them to do His will by the sheer weight of omnipotence but by the sweet influence of divine grace and love. It is as the hymn-writer says;

"The child with joy appears;
Cheerful he does his Father's will,
And loves as much as fears." (252)

I can say to you, the path of the will of God is a safe, blessed path of following Christ, and the Lord will be with you in it, and uphold, strengthen, bless and honour you in it. He makes His will known.

"Thus saith the Lord God; I will yet" I wonder if the Lord will help me to speak on yet. The term relates largely to time. There is the word 'not yet'; it will be accomplished at a future time. Here it is the word 'yet'. "I will yet." I believe it means at whatever time or in whatever circumstances those who are born again and seek the Lord and desire to fear Him, the Throne of Grace is open to them now. You see the force of it to those in Babylon. "I will yet." It is open; you can come now. You are in a foreign land: the Throne of Grace is open. Wherever you are in the world; whatever your age,- "I will yet." He is waiting to hear and respond to your cry as He gives it. It is a word that takes all of you in now. "I will yet." He is on the Throne of Grace. How beautiful. It is not a case of you being disqualified, or not allowed to come. The door is open.

"The door of Thy mercy stands open all day,
To the poor and the needy, who knock by the way." (11)

"For His grace and power are such,
None can ^{ever} ask too much." (379)

"I will yet." Beautiful, is it not? You could be alone on the sea; on watch in the crow's nest. The Lord puts a cry in your heart. "I will yet." In the hospital, in an emergency, difficulty, trial, in a deep sense of need, "I will yet," The Throne of Grace is open to you. It will be wonderful to see Him face to face. "Upon himself shall his crown flourish." - to hope you are a jewel of His crown. "I will yet." Your fathers, grandfathers, grandmothers saw Him, and there is room for you: there is room for your children. "I will yet." There is not a closed door. You are not barred; no one is who feels his need. No circumstances are too impossible. "I will yet." It looked to the dear, gracious people in Babylon as though they would never come out. "O my people, I will open your graves." They felt buried. "I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel." "Yet" Take it home with you. Think of the Throne of Grace: the door of mercy is open yet; it is open to you. It is open to the vilest of sinners who are brought to feel their need. No case is beyond the Lord's power, of those who are in the Covenant. I hope

this will be potent, positive encouragement to you to come.

"I will yet, - what? For this." I will tell you one thing: as the Spirit of God indwelling, maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered, this internal intercession corresponds with the intercession of our great High Priest. The Spirit of God would never teach you to pray for anything that is not the will of God. You may pray for fifty years: if it is not the will of God you will never persuade Him to do it. The Spirit of God never teaches you to pray for that which it is not His purpose to give. No one can influence God to do what is contrary to His will. Think about it deeply. "For this." What is this? It relates to all the blessings of the Kingdom named in the paragraph of the chapter 36 from the 25th verse. It relates to all the blessings our risen Saviour possessed according to His infinite merit to bestow on His people. In the suffering Suretyship of the Lord Jesus Christ see emerging His infinite merit. When He rose from the tomb He took possession of all the blessings He merited, and He bestows them. "I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste." His fruit, - the fruit of a victorious Christ.

"For this." and it will have reference to the last part of the Text. "For this." what? "I will increase them with men like a flock." Don't think it shuts out you ladies: it does not. It is a word for the Church of God. "I will yet for this be inquired of." It is all the blessings the Lord has exhibited to the eye of faith, and also, what we had in our Lesson this afternoon concerning Cornelius. He was a gracious man, who feared God with all his house. Wonderful house! and it is the Spirit's record here; he "gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway." He was a man of great prayer and love: he used his substance to the glory of God; so much so, presently "he saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day, - that is about three p.m. - an angel of God coming in to him, and saying "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God." Do you know what that involves? The Trinity: your soul inspired with divine breath, your prayer passing through the mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ, perfumed in His infinite merit, and coming before the Father as a memorial as He sees it. Have you ever felt this in prayer and almsgiving? It is a sweet way to live. Take a newly married couple, and both love and fear God. It used to be £4 a week, or £1. The point is, those two, devoted to the Lord

would set aside something for the Lord: and not only that, if there was an emergency, or any in deep need, they would freely give. I did: no one knew about it. I went to the House of God, and the Lord fed and nourished my soul. On the box in the lobby were the words; "The labourer is worthy of his hire." and I emptied my purse: it was to Christ, pure and holy. No one knew, only the Lord. It 'comes up', it is done to Christ, and it is as ~~then~~ though He says; "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before My Father."

He said; "And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do." He had been praying Concerning Cornelius, he was not crowned: he needed a crown. "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." Do what The thing that will complete your case; crown you. You know what took place Peter was willing: he preached a short sermon on Christ, from the skies, through His life and ministry and baptism; to the cross, the grave, the resurrection, and back to the skies; and the Lord began to do it; to crown Cornelius and his household; to complete the matter. The Holy Ghost fell upon them. That is what the Church needs to day; for the Holy Ghost to fall upon them.

"to do it for them." to do this for them;- to fill you with His Spirit. And the beautiful sequence; "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord." The Lord crowned them, and they crown Him. Amen.