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KAT971

Notes of Sermon preached by our Pastor
on Sunday Afternoon, October 18, 1981.

Lesson. Isaiah 33.

Text. Isaiah 30. 20,21.

Destitute of the gracious exercise of living faith this Scripture, especially in the opening language will be most unattractive to our flesh. For certainly no poor soul relishes beforehand the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, but would seek to be immune from such sorrow. The language of father Israel is opportune and apt and expressive when he said, "And if it must be so now, do this." The Hymn takes it up;

"And must it, Lord, be so?
And must Thy children bear
Such various kinds of woe,
Such soul-perplexing fear?
Are these the blessings we expect?
Is this the lot of God's elect?"

You know there is a secret that made the Hymnwriter say, "Take your contrast; make a comparison humbly with the ungodly." Certainly we are miracles of divine grace: it is wonderful the Lord has looked in compassion on us. He soon saw the divine secret, and as we said for substance in the introduction this morning and reminded our gracious hearers as we presented the blessed subject, it is clothed with love, compassion, mercy, filled with divine faithfulness, infinite goodness, heavenly sympathy, almighty power, all-sufficient grace. Look at it in that light; not as affliction and adversity in the abstract. Look at the contrast, and it is monumental in the Hymn when he knew the secret. Can you say it?

"Boast not, ye sons of earth,
Nor look with scornful eyes;" This is the crux of the matter.
"Above your highest mirth,
Our saddest hours we prize."

The earth is full of mirth wherever you go, London, the cities, the villages; it is as the crackling of thorns under a pot. Mirth is superficial, false, vain; there is nothing in it. "Above your highest mirth" what do you prize? "My saddest hours." It is not natural, it is divine. It is the efficacy of grace in the soul because you belong to the Lord. He is your Father, Friend, Saviour. "My saddest hours," Why? Because

there is that in my saddest hours that is good for my soul to pass through as sanctified, to wean me from earth and bring me nearer Christ. Because there is a rich spiritual content in them, something that is vital. It is the Lord's teaching, grace, favour, His mercy to my soul. My cry enters His blessed ear and heart. See how the Hymn continues. "Although my cup seems filled with gall," There is nothing more bitter than gall on the earth. You want to think of your Saviour. "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost." "Although my cup seems filled with gall," Does it? Have I found a few precious souls here in these truths? There will be a time when it will be your case. "There's something secret" I did not know until the Lord told me, until I saw the King in His beauty; saw the Great Teacher, the glorious Prophet of the Church. I did not know until the love of Christ flowed into my soul. I have enjoyed it ever since. "There's something secret sweetens all." It is holy efficacy: it takes the bitterest thing and makes it sweet. That is how I present the subject to you; not stark, looking formidable. That is how we should view it after the flesh. It is clothed with divine faithfulness, sweet sympathy. That is where you come into communion with Him.

There are mitigating things that will alter everything, as the second word in the Text shows. "And though" In varying degrees and measures every child of God enters into 'the bread of ~~affliction~~ adversity and the water of affliction'. There is no escape clause, no immunity. You may think of infants drawn from womb and breast: for those who are spared there is no immunity. Not to be too dogmatic, it is as though the longer you go and the further you travel and the older you become the deeper you go into these things. There are several reasons for this. One is, the area of potential is greater. You started as a single person and that was your main area. You are married; the family arrives and the area increases, and so on. There is greater potential for adversity. I know well what it means. It is the same with a pastor and his flock. It is not just exchanging salutations, "The Lord be with you and help you" and departing, and no further interest in the flock. It is something that is always with us. It is the same with a large family. So in a thousand ways you come into unexpected things. Things you anticipated you never come

into. God is merciful to you. Over the years with various special services in the Chapels I have seen pastor and people in prosperity, cheerful, joyful; singing the praises of God, baptising, very favoured and comfortable and on the mountain top. All glory to the Lord: we love to have baptisings. In two or three years there is a different scene. Instead of prosperity and peace there is a furnace. Some are the cause of great anxiety and distress. The poor pastor and deacons and some of the flock are distressed. I have seen it many times. You are in it: in your lot is the bread of adversity and the water of affliction. There are things that are adverse; they go against you, or they seem to. I so like the Hymn; it is so beautiful and apposite.

"Each seeming loss improves their gains;
Each trouble comfort brings."

The trouble you dread breaks ~~with~~ with blessings, mercies, comforts on your head. You get the biggest blessing of your life. The Lord is so with you, near you. What do you say in adversity? We want a right spirit before God, to be under the influence of the Holy Ghost, to be in a right frame before Him. What do you say? "It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good." said Eli. Great grace is needed. That is why we said this morning, one of the words concerning teaching will be, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God." Do you say, "What prospect have I?" A great prospect. The sacred words inspired through Peter tell us, "that he may exalt you in due time." My son, you are going low. I will lift you up. You are in a deep place. I will support, deliver, exalt you in due time. The first thing is to be humbled. When the Lord exalts it is a happy day. Dear Job said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." He was in a sweet frame of soul under the blessed influence of the Spirit.

So there is the bread of adversity. What will enable you to partake of it and assimilate it? Do you feel you must flee from it? You will partake of it. What enables you to? His love will make you willing and you will partake.. It is remarkable that as you are made willing you partake of the bread of adversity. The Lord is near you and will requite you, recompense you. There is something secret in store for you. It is as though the Lord is proving you, as to whether you fear and love Him.

God said to Abraham, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." and he did. The Lord proved him. He proves us. Are we willing to eat the bread of adversity and drink the waters of affliction? There is a divine principle relating to afflictions, adversities and trials of the Lord's people.

"He never takes away our all-
Himself He gives us still."

Will you offer up your son? Are you willing to yield what most you prize to Him? Only love divine can do it. The Lord appeared for Abraham and delivered him, but he was obedient. Nothing could be greater by way of distress for him than to offer up his only son. He was a type of the Lord Jesus and Abraham recognised it.

"And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity," It is the path and it may be in providence or health. You lose your health. "Though strength, and health, and friends be gone," It is to prove the faithfulness of God, your Friend, your Saviour. And there is another thing. The Lord sanctifying it He weans you from things of the world, even lawful things. That is one facet: more important is, it means,

"Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee;
E'en though it be a cross
That raiseth me."

"And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity," I wonder how many to day feel they are in it in some measure, or have been in it? The Lord is turning your captivity....Bread is the staple article of our dietary. This bread of adversity is as a cross. You can never take it up. One day you get a glimpse of the cross of Christ: you take yours up and it is nothing. Made willing by love you partake and assimilate the bread of adversity.

"Cheer up, ye travelling souls;
On Jesus' aid rely;
He sees us when we see not Him,
And always hears our cry."

It is not the end: you will not always be in a place of adversity; things will be different. "And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity." It is a day of adversity in the Nation. Would to God that millions might know what it is to have it sanctified to them and seek the Lord!

"And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity," The figure used shows it is not just something to go and look at in a frame. It is real, it is on the table for you to eat. It is not something to look at in the Bible and turn the pages: it becomes your experience; you are in it. Often there are several things together. You think you will sink, be overwhelmed, submerged, never rise, never endure. You will. You will find, "O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit: so wilt thou recover me, and make me to live."

"And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction." Both are vital to life on the earth level. Water is essential to our existence. There is the water of life: do you know what it is to drink freely? This is the water of affliction. You know what we said recently concerning the cup containing^a potion, a mixture. If the Lord puts it in your hand He will make you willing to drink. There is love in it. That is the wonder of it all. You will never sink. You will come into the sweetness of His love. The water of affliction means something that causes pain, distress, agony. It may be physical, mental, spiritual, or a compound: it often is. Hezekiah knew it: there was a cup of affliction for him. I do wish I could get over to you the wonderful sympathy and compassion of Christ, because when He was here "His path was much rougher and darker than mine," and He still retains His human heart,

"Though throned in highest bliss;
And feels each tempted member's pains;
For our affliction's His."

The dear Saviour feels for you in your distress. This is unparalleled, and He will cause to flow to your spirit His sympathy and love and compassion, and you will feel it. It is wonderful. The blessings are so great, ultimately you will say you would never have been without that path and experience. You have gained, learned, received in the path that which is impossible to express or bless the Lord for as highly as you would. Some afflictions are permanent. Father and mother have a poor child with a congenital abnormality: it is permanent until the child dies. O this water of affliction! There are those who know what the Hymn says, to feel their mud walled cottage shake. It is the water of affliction. You are afflicted by Satan, by enemies, by the waywardness of some you love. And there is a whole host of physical distempers, as Miss Cooper who was paralised and

on her back for a number of years. My own grandfather in London was on his bed for years. It is a path, is it not? What a cup of affliction! It makes me marvel when I wake in the morning and can stretch my legs and get out of bed and walk.

"And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction." You know it, a number of you, in the loss of a beloved husband, a dear wife and mother, and beloved parents. It is the water of affliction, He says, "yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers," The 'corner' is illustrated in the account of the life of Jezebel, when she slew the prophets of the Lord. Obadiah, a servant to Ahab, who feared the Lord, "took an hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave." They were in a corner; the people did not see them. In days of famine of hearing the word of the Lord, the Lord takes His servants and the people have no minister. I wonder whether that day will come to a large extent. It is a solemn thing. He says, "yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers," -the great Prophet of the Church and a Teacher. "Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off." Amen.